GRANDFRIENDS: A LOCAL CHURCH MODEL FOR PERSONAL

CONTACT BETWEEN SENIOR HIGH YOUNG PEOPLE

AND SINGLE ELDERLY PERSONS

by

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ABSTRACT

The problem addressed by this project is the isolation of young and elderly people from any meaningful contact with one another in the life of the local church. To this end two models for contact were designed and tested in two different suburban churches.

Both models were based on friendship and dialogue as theological concepts set in the life of the church. Youth and seniors were paired up as "grandfriends" for a period of approximately two months.

In the first model, youth were paired with single, institutionalized elderly persons. Life experiences were shared, and youth helped the seniors with such things as letter writing.

In the second model, senior high youth were paired up with single, independent elderly persons. Extensive suggestions were given to aid the sharing of life and faith experiences between grandfriends, and pairs were encouraged to complete a small project together. Group meetings were included involving all participants.

The thesis of the project is that cultivating contact between young and elderly persons to share life and faith experiences meets needs for both age groups, and is therefore an obvious opportunity to seize in the church.

Additionally, it will enrich the lives of each person, encourage understanding across generations, replace dread of aging with graceful acceptance, and awaken--however dimly--an awareness of the hand of God leading us all through the experiences of our lives.

This thesis was confirmed, and a revised model is suggested for adaptation and use in any local church setting.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

I. TITLE

"Grandfriends: A Local Church Model for Personal Contact Between Senior High Young People and Single Elderly Persons."

II. PROBLEM

The problem addressed by this project is the isolation of young and elderly people from any meaningful contact with one another in the life of the local church.

III. BACKGROUND AND IMPORTANCE

A. Background

Despite all the attention given to various encounter models in the late 60's and throughout the 70's, and despite the more recent attention given to prayer, meditation, and the spiritual life in seminaries and churches, there remains a pervasive sense of isolation, separation, and superficiality among persons in largely white, "liberal" churches in suburban and urban areas. This may be observed by the infrequency of personal contact among church members other than on Sundays, and a relative lack of depth,

intimacy, or involvement of such contact at any time.
Irregular attendance at worship is also a sign of such
isolation, and suggests that basic needs for such contact
are simply not being met.

The central place of the individual, in place of the
group, community, or family, is a trait of our times and
culture. I agree with Cobb, Bellah, and others that we have
extended in our society an emphasis on the individual beyond
what is necessary, useful, or healthy for us.[1] We have
become alienated from ourselves. What we now need are not
more structures which encourage our uniqueness as
individuals, but more which emphasize our common plight as
members one of another, in community as one body. "What is
tragic about the condition of modern man, and what
constitutes his loneliness, is the absence of dialogue, of
spiritual communication with others."[2] It is as though we
were engaged in an approach-avoidance dilemma with
ourselves: we expect ourselves (and others) to be totally
self-sufficient (not needing others becomes avoidance of
others), while we also experience a need to be and share

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[1] John B. Cobb, The Structure of Christian Existence
(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967). Robert N. Bellah,
Beyond Belief (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), and Robert N.
Bellah, The Broken Covenant (New York: Seabury Press,
1975).

[2] Ignace Lepp, The Ways of Friendship (New York:
Macmillan, 1966), p. 13.

ourselves with others (need for others becomes approach toward others).

We are all under the pressure of time and the need to prioritize our life-involvements (our confrontation with finitude); but the results of our prioritizing frequently leave us less satisfied and further alienated from others and ourselves. Despite the fact that people are not flocking to liberal churches these days, those who are are often there precisely because of the needs they experience, and are having met to some extent, to share themselves with others--no longer remaining individuals alone, but persons in a context, in a community of faith, relationship, and caring.

This is a problem for the church because its very structure is designed to bring persons together in Christ. We are failing at our mission in the liberal church--in any church--to the extent that persons live lives in isolation and estrangement from one another. The command to love one another demands to be lived into reality for the church to more fully be the Church.

The problem in the '60's was not that church people did not need encounter, sensitivity, or growth groups, but that the liberal churches adopted these trends as though they were somehow alien to the church's true task, but nonetheless needed for our lives. We looked to the culture

to guide our faith; the cart got in front of the horse. It was our will to participate in groups, and not God's will that we share the Gospel, that operated. God, it would seem, has nothing against groups—after all, the church itself is a kind of group—except when groups become ends in themselves rather than means to full life and the Kingdom of God.

It is our Christian faith—at whatever degree of sophistication or maturity—which calls us into genuine relatedness with one another, not the culture's recognition that we are estranged and lonely. The great problem for the church and for Christian ministry is cultivating the discovery that when we (two or more Christians) allow ourselves to genuinely share our lives (risk) with one another, we are engaged in a mutual discovery of life and faith.

In the midst of our approach-avoidance dilemma we remain stuck, unable to risk, experiencing a loss of faith. We are understandably suspicious of any attempt to remedy the situation, for we have been disappointed with every previous attempt. Even, or especially, the groups in the church are often the locus of great hope and the occasion for much disappointment.

It is my contention that no contrived group can begin to meet the deep human need and basic religious

requirement for genuine human contact unless it can overcome
the artificiality and interpersonal barrier such contrivance
carries with it.

"Contrived" means "invented"; somehow unnatural.
Growth group encounter models were brought into the church
from the realm of psychology and "human potential movements"
and were hence "contrived." With only a few exceptions,
they did not continue for any length of time. To expect any
contrived model for personal relationship to work within the
church is to suggest that in the church we mimic real life
rather than live or create it. In such groups, then, we
would be "playing out" our lives, complete with emotions,
but could have only a "vicarious" life; not a _real_ life.

The alternative to contrivance is cultivation. We
do not need to bring in an outside, contrived model. What
we do need to do is to cultivate a model for genuine human
caring and involvement _within_ the church; a model which
grows out of our experiences of the church and the Christian
faith.

The attempt to cultivate our relationships in the
church is to engage in a project of faith: faith in the
church, in one another, and in God through Jesus Christ
working in our midst. This, then, is a faith project to
cultivate genuine human contact between young and elderly
persons within the church.

B. _Importance_

      1. _Isolation Does Exist_. American culture has been described since the 1960's as a "youth culture." The prime of life has been lowered to run from adolescence to the early 20's. It is an age of beauty, freedom, and self-oriented gratification marked by an absence of constraints, responsibility, and commitment. We have made a god out of youth and its supposed virtues, hence when age catches up to us we spend inordinate attention on the ultimately futile task of preserving it: make up, exercise, clothing, all marketed to keep us "looking young" despite our age.

      This overemphasis, to remain youthful at all costs, has, I believe, peaked, but its effects can be seen throughout our lives, especially in the ways we have isolated the elderly from places of value or significance.

      To retire in our culture is seen and experienced as the "beginning of the end": one's useful, important, and meaningful contribution to society is terminating; one moves from being a _creator of_ the culture to a _burden on_ the culture. (Our Social Security system also contributes to this mentality).

      Our youth-oriented culture has had its profound affects upon the elderly as well. Retirement is seen as the

time of leisure wherein to gratify one's long-postponed
desire for pleasure. So the few affluent elderly who live
in retirement Meccas which offer endless opportunities for
pleasure satisfaction: golf, tennis, health clubs, pool,
restaurants, travel packages, with minimization of
inconvenience (easy access to stores, grounds kept elegant
by others, laundry collected, etc.), are viewed as the ones
to envy.

Whether by supposed choice, as with the affluent
elderly, and the vast majority of seniors who still reside
in their own homes; or by "necessity," as with those
requiring nursing care, the elderly are by and large
isolated from the mainstream of life in our culture.
Neither is this isolation confined to the elderly, nor all
that recent a phenomenon, as Paul Tournier reveals writing
in 1956,

> If we send the sick to hospital, the mentally sick to
> the mental hospital, the infirm to the Old People's
> Home, those with nervous complaints to the clinic, and
> difficult children to the reformatory, it is undoubtedly
> because they will be better cared for there. But it is
> also a little bit, whether or no we admit it, in order
> to remove from our sight these witnesses to human
> frailty. Civilized society does not like to see
> distress and poverty. . . . it does not care to meet
> them at every turn of everyday life.[3]

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[3]Paul Tournier, The Meaning of Persons (New York:
Harper & Row, 1957), p. 152.

2. <u>The Church has fostered continued isolation.</u> In spite of the fact that the church is the one institution in society relating to persons from birth to death, it has consistently followed the culture rather than creatively seizing its calling, thereby passing up opportunities to reverse the isolation of persons, one from another.

A few examples will show clearly that isolation is encouraged rather than corrected in the church. Attention is focused upon the isolation of the elderly and young persons.

a. The church has helped build countless nursing homes, health care facilities, and housing projects for seniors, but has rarely sought to vitally involve or relate residents to the active life of the church.

b. The church fosters age-segmentation through its educational and social offerings. Classes and clubs keep people from meeting others from different generations. Most intergenerational learning experiences have been too contrived and insufficiently promoted to overcome age-segmentation, although the general approach itself is sound.

c. Except at worship, the church has not offered real opportunities for personal contact between members of different generations.

d. The church's ministry is often _de facto_ intended
for persons in nuclear families. Singles, beyond high
school and college years, often justifiably feel that the
church doesn't have anything _for them_. Also, very little
support is given to the extended family, where grandparents
may be living in the same household, or in close proximity
to grandchildren.[4]

It is extremely important to the life of the church
to foster opportunities for genuine contact--real sharing of
the experiences of life which have helped shape each
person--among all its members, but especially those in age
groups who are separated from one another or have particular
needs (e.g. physical limitations, shut-ins). Dialogue
across the generations holds promise of rich discoveries for
the persons so engaged, and for a revival of the church's
true task of being "members one of another."

The clergy should recognize in this
intergenerational exposure an opportunity, which is easily
seized and implemented, to deepen the interactive life of
the church. In such a way this simple model for personal
contact may contribute to the upbuilding of the community of

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[4]See Maggie Kuhn, "The Congregation as an extended
caring family," in her _Maggie Kuhn on Aging: A Dialogue_
(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977) quoted in _Aging and
the Human Spirit_, (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1981), pp.
241ff.

faith by bridging the cultural barriers, so in evidence in the church, to genuine human dialog between young and old, thereby revealing for old and young participants, as well as for the whole church, our common humanness before our Creator God. The professional leadership in the church need do very little other than arrange for interested seniors and youth to meet with one another on a regular basis for at least six to eight weeks, with only a very few guidelines and suggestions. Their mutually human agenda to know and be known, combined with the mutual fulfillment of needs, will provide more than enough interest and energy to sustain the project. Then, "spread the word," keep it up, it's catching !

IV. THESIS

Cultivating contact between young and elderly persons to share life and faith experiences meets needs for both age groups and is therefore an obvious opportunity to seize in the church. Additionally, it will enrich the lives of each person, encourage understanding (of the "life issues" of youth by seniors, and of seniors by youth) across generations, replace dread of aging with graceful acceptance, and awaken—however dimly—an awareness of the hand of God present with us all, leading us on through the experiences of our lives.

V. DEFINITION OF MAJOR TERMS

A. <u>Aging</u>

Albert Lansing's most general definition is a place
to begin:

> Aging refers to the process of change in the organism
> from the time of fertilization of the ovum until the
> death of the individual.[5]

It is "the process of change" aspect of aging which equally

applies throughout the life cycle, and unites young and

elderly persons; indeed, all persons.

Conscious of the universality of the process, but

moving into the humanity of aging, we will follow the

definition of Nouwen and Gaffney in this project:

> Aging is the turning of the wheel, the gradual
> fulfillment of the life cycle in which receiving matures
> in giving, and living makes dying worthwhile. Aging
> does not need to be hidden or denied, but can be
> understood, affirmed, and experienced as a process of
> growth by which the mystery of life is slowly revealed
> to us.[6]

Or, more succinctly, in a phrase of Robert

McClellan, "[Aging] is the means by which one becomes

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[5]Albert Lansing, "General Biology of Senescence," in
<u>Handbook of Aging and the Individual</u>, ed. James E. Birren
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), cited in
Robert W. McClellan, <u>Claiming a Frontier: Ministry and
Older People</u> (Los Angeles: Andrus Gerontology Center,
University of Southern California Press, 1977), p. 10.

[6]Henri J. M. Nouwen and Walter J. Gaffney, <u>Aging: The
Fulfillment of Life</u> (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), p. 14.

increasingly like oneself in attitude, interest, and acting."[7]

Aging, then, is a universal characteristic of the human condition, inescapable and yet denied throughout our culture. Along with Nouwen and Gaffney, I share the perspective that,

> . . . aging is the most common human experience which overarches the human community as a rainbow of promises. It is an experience so profoundly human that it breaks through the artificial boundaries between childhood and adulthood, and between adulthood and old age. It is so filled with promises that it can lead us to discover more and more of life's treasures.[8]

Aging is something which happens to persons and so can be genuinely shared for the mutual enrichment of life. It is also a major component of the abundant life of the Christian, for in truly aging we are most fully living and most successfully preparing for death:

> When aging can be experienced as a growing by giving, not only of mind and heart, but of life itself, then it can become a movement towards the hour when we can say with the author of the Second Letter to Timothy, "As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation, and the time has come for me to be gone. I have fought the good fight to the end. I have run the race to the finish. I have kept the faith.[9]

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[7]McClellan, p. 15.

[8]Nouwen and Gaffney, pp. 19-20.

[9]Ibid., pp. 14, 16. Scripture reference is 2 Timothy 4:6-7 from The Jerusalem Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966).

B. Dialogue

. . . is that address and response between persons in
which there is a flow of meaning between them in spite
of all the obstacles that normally would block the
relationship. It is interaction between persons in
which one of them seeks to give himself as he is to the
other, and seeks also to know the other as the other
is.[10]

C. Listening With Care

Listening . . . is not a sympathetic nodding or a
friendly repetition of hmm, hmm, hmm. No, it is a very
active awareness of the coming together of two lives.
When I listen, I listen not only to a story, but also
with a story. It is exactly against the background of
my own limited story that I discover the uniqueness of
the story which I am priviledged to hear. It is
precisely with my own articulate awareness of the piece
of living which I represent that I can be surprised,
sadly or gladly, and can respond from the center of my
own life. Thus, listening is a very active and
extremely alert form of care. . . . The important thing
is that two lives are coming together in a healing way.
It is like weaving a new pattern with two different
lifestories stretched out on the same loom. After a
story is told and received with care, the lives of the
two people have become different. Two people have
discovered their own unique stories, and two people have
become an integral part of a new fellowship.
        It will be clear that careful listening to the
elderly has a special quality because the elderly have
such a full story to give. Careful listening to the
elderly is revealing to them the uniqueness of their
contribution to the experiment of living and to receive
their story as a lasting gift which transcends the
boundaries of birth and death. It has nothing to do
with a patient hearing of the same old tales. Instead,
it is a freeing of the human experience from the chains
of the individual memory and a way of integrating this

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[10]Reuel L. Howe, The Miracle of Dialogue (New York:
Seabury Press, 1963), p. 37.

experience in the common human memory which remain
available as a source of learning to all generations.[11]

D. Personal Contact ("Genuine Human Contact")

The mutual result of "listening with care" and
"engaging in dialogue" with another which reveals oneself to
oneself, to the other, and to God.

In Tournier's terms, ". . . what creates in me
consciousness of being a person is entering into
relationship with another person, the 'thou.'"[12] "In the
other person who approaches us so closely that he becomes
totally committed with regard to us, God himself is
approaching us, and compelling us to commit ourselves
also."[13]

E. Contrived

"Invented" and somehow unnatural or artificial. In
the context of this project, "contrived" is contrasted with
"cultivated" (see below) to the end that a contrived model
for application in the life of the church is forced or
inappropriate. A contrived model is created _outside_ the
life of the church, and applied to church life.

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[11]Henri J. M. Nouwen, "Care and the Elderly" in _Aging
and the Human Spirit_, p. 294.

[12]Tournier, p. 125.

[13]Ibid., p. 161.

F. Cultivated

A model which grows from within the life of the church; it is natural, organic, and appropriate to church life. Such a model grows out of a pre-existing context, and therefore applies naturally. Cultivated means nurtured or inspired within; it recognizes an already given setting which contains all that is necessary for growth.

G. Communication

"Communication occurs whenever there is a meeting of meaning between two or more persons."[14]

VI. WORK PREVIOUSLY DONE

Although concern for ministry to, for, and with the elderly has grown dramatically in the last ten years, there is still no widely agreed upon theology of aging which might serve as a guide to the cultivation of such ministry in the church. Surprisingly, very few creative programs can be found in any of the current literature on Ministry and Aging which actually counteract the age segmentation accompanying so many church activities. Indeed, I have located no other program or suggestion which brings senior high young persons

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[14]Howe, pp. 22-23.

together with single senior citizens for the mutual

enrichment of both. As you will note below, there is a

bewildering absence of intergenerational church educational

settings in general, despite the great emphasis on such

settings in curricular materials from the late 1960's

through the 1970's. It is my untested assumption that this

is in no small way due to the externally contrived (i.e.

designed outside the life of the church and applied to it)

nature of these intergenerational events.

The alternative is to cultivate programs involving

persons of different generations within the life of the

church, thereby meeting the specific needs and desires of

everyone to truly be "members one of another," to share

their God-given humanity for their mutual benefit, which,

incidently, includes the edifying of the church.[15]

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[15]cf. the following recommendation from the White House
Conference on Aging, 1971: "Efforts should be made to meet
the spiritual needs of the aging by ministering to them in
conjunction with people of all ages, as well as in groups
with special needs. It is noted that special attention
should be given to allowing older persons to share in the
planning and implementation of all programs related to
them." Recommendation VII, "Elderly in Age-Integrated
Programs," Section on Spiritual Well-Being, Toward a
National Policy on Aging, Proceedings of the 1971 White
House Conference on Aging, Volume II (Washington: U.S.
Government Printing Office, 1973), cited in Aging and the
Human Spirit, p. 220.

The works previously done are divided into five categories: common issues for young and old, church-related programs involving seniors and youth, visitation programs, reminiscence programs, and the theory and practice of dialogue.

A. Common Issues for Young and Old[16]

(1) Strive for Meaning

(2) Seek Career or Second Career - Training needs

(3) Interest in the sexual experience of life

(4) License to drive

(5) Car insurance

(6) Concern and Questions about Societal Values

(7) Action oriented Task Force participants

(8) Similar Societal Treatment[17]

(9) Desire and Time to Listen[18]

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[16]First seven issues are from Donald F. Clingan, Aging Persons in the Community of Faith (Indianapolis: Indiana Commission on the Aging and Aged, 1975), pp. 21-22.

[17]". . . the young and the old have the most in common since they are treated so similarly--both suffering a subhuman status, the one inhibited, the other discarded." William Stringfellow, Instead of Death (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), p. 13.

[18]Nouwen, pp. 97-99. Cf. the definition of "listening with care" on page 10.

(10) Loneliness[19]

(11) Family Trouble

(12) Outrage

(13) Closed Minds

(14) Joy

Rose Jarrett writes of the discovery by both seniors and youth of their "God-given sameness." The context is familiar: a restaurant frequented by the elderly which employs largely teen-agers. Jarrett describes the essence of inspiration behind this Grandfriend Project:

> One can see, in this daily atmosphere of seventeen and seventy, a rewarding compatibility of mutual human relations in all age groups. Age differences do not separate what God has instilled in all of us. These friends have reached beyond the outward contrasts of ripened complexions and wrinkled skins, strong muscled legs, and uncertain steps, impulsive vitality and mellowed wisdom and found instead a God-given sameness. These young persons have found in the hearts of their old friends their same love of wonder, their same hunger for expectancy, their same courage to tackle another challenge and live each day to its fullest. They have found that a moment of kindness and caring, unselfish giving and graceous receiving, loving and being loved is living. They have found that when this ceases youth as well as age is dead.[20]

From this most human of perspectives it can be seen that a common issue for young and old alike is life, sharing it

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[19]Merton P. Strommen, _Five Cries of Youth_ (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), although these were isolated with respect to youth, they apply to the elderly as well. The next five issues are from Strommen's book.

[20]Rose Jarrett, "Youth and the Senior Citizen," _The Christian Home_, 7:28 (June 1975) 30.

with others, and living it to the full. Perhaps this is partially responsible for the very favorable attitude grandchildren hold toward their grandparents.[21] It may also explain why, "For young adult grandchildren, visiting with grandparents is more qualitative rather than ritualistic."[22] Additional support for this shared attitude about life among youth and seniors may be found by looking at the appropriate stages of life according to Erikson.

Although Erikson, via Webster, draws more attention to the similarity between the first and last (eighth) stages of the life cycle focusing on "trust" ("the assured reliance on another's integrity"),[23] there is also a common thread between adolescence and old age. For the young person, the crucial choice is between identity and role confusion: what she appears to be to others as contrasted with what she feels she is herself. For the elderly, the issue is between ego integrity and despair. The emotional integration of ego

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[21]Joan Robertson, in the article cited below, says, "Contrary to popular notions, young adult grandchildren espouse a series of very favorable attitudes toward grandparents. For example, of the respondents, 92% indicated that 'a child would miss much if there were no grandparents when he was growing up.' According to 90% of the respondents, grandparents are not 'too old-fashioned or out of touch to be able to help their grandchildren.'" Joan Robertson, "Significance of Grandparents: Perceptions of Young Adult Grandchildren," Gerontologist, 16:2 (April 1976) 138.

[22]Ibid., p. 140.

[23]Erik H. Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 269.

integrity is like that integration previously accomplished in the adolescent establishing identity. Likewise, role confusion in the adolescent and despair in the elderly are both failures of ego integration. These life cycle crises are startlingly complementary and offer psychological justification for the natural desire of seniors and youth to make genuine personal contact and share life experiences, for such assists both in their life cycle issues.

B. <u>Church Programs Involving Youth and Seniors</u>

1. Maggie Kuhn, in a chapter entitled, "The Church's Continuing Role with the Aging," says,

> A few churches have been experimenting with education which is not entirely age-segregated, which enables old people to contribute to the nurture of the young, and which enables young people to prepare themselves for new roles.[24]

She continues with the example of a Lutheran church in Philadelphia where most members were old and "scared to death of the big black teen-agers who had moved into their old neighborhood." The young pastor arranged with the social studies teacher in the local high school to interview the old people. "Fears and tensions lessened. Trust was built. New aspects of the gospel were clearly shown. They established interaction and built some trust."[25]

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[24]Kuhn, p. 240.

[25]Ibid.

2. The United Methodist Youth Fellowship at Akron, New York, entertained a group of about 30 senior church members at an annual dinner party each year, from 1973 to 1976, including delivering a hot meal to those who could not attend.

> They sat at table, gaily conversing with their older friends. Together they exchanged comments and views, the adventures of days past and present in delightful table conversation. One could tell by the light in otherwise darkened and lowly eyes how deeply appreciated the experience was.[26]

3. College young men participate in Senior Adult Ministries at First Church of the Nazarene in Bethany, Oklahoma by forming the "Circle K Chore Co." "These young men give service to senior adults by doing odd jobs without pay."[27]

C. Visitation Programs

1. Secular. a. Visitation programs for the elderly exist throughout the Greater Los Angeles area. One was described in the Los Angeles Times.[28] This program was offered through the Orange County Mental Health Association and involved twenty-three adult volunteers. They made a

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[26]Rev. Carl M. Vander Burg, "Senior Highs Minister to Senior Citizens," Church School, 9:23 (September 1976) 23.

[27]McClellan, p. 59.

[28]Diane Elvenstar, "Visitation Program for the Elderly," No. 1 in the series "Dealing with Loneliness," Los Angeles Times (Dececember 17, 1979) Part IV, p. 1.

minimum commitment of one year to make daily calls, weekly

visits, and a written monthly report. In addition, the

volunteers, most of whom were women, attended fifteen hours

of training before being matched with an older friend. They

also had to attend bi-monthly meetings at which all

volunteers gathered to have questions answered, support

supplied, and information shared. Volunteers were recruited

through announcements in newspapers and local church

bulletins. New training sessions began every six months.

b. Some 200 teenagers in seven 4H Clubs in Wadena

County, Minnesota volunteered at the Shady Lane Nursing Home

"doing just about everything." The program began in 1970

and was described in a January, 1975 article.

> The residents look forward mostly to the enthusiasm and
> the laughter of youth breaking into the monotonous
> quiet. . . . The days become more meaningful as adopted
> grandparents . . . anticipate the visits of their
> "grandchildren" when they can tell stories about the
> "olden days" to interested listeners. As young and old
> learn to know each other, the youths become aware of
> some of the problems of aging—just as the elderly . . .
> share the confidences of their young friends and become
> sensitive to their problems in living in a changing
> world.[29]

c. Elementary Public School Classes in Claremont,

California were invited to have each pupil "adopt a

grandparent" by the Claremont Red Cross. "Gradually a

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[29]Jo Nelson, "Youths Build Bridges of Love and
Understanding," Accent on Youth, (January 1975) 20-23.

relationship will develop between the elderly person and the students, enriching each other's lives."[30]

This idea has been widely used with benefits to young and old alike (see 2b below).

2. <u>Church Related</u>. a. "The Development of a lay ministry to elderly and shut-in members of the Rural Valley United Presbyterian Church" is a Doctor of Ministry dissertation by John Robert Stevenson at Drew University in 1980.

b. "Adopting Grandparents" was included in the Christian Education: Shared Approaches curriculum, "Exploring the Bible," ages 3-5.[31]

c. Interestingly, Maggie Kuhn sees visitation programs from the perspective of the grandparents, and even specifically refers to church school settings with children and the specific needs of teen-agers:

> . . . it would be marvelous if older people were teaching the very young ones. Many children in our congregations today live far away from their grandparents. There are a variety of new "foster grandparent" roles that the older members of congregations could play in relation to the younger

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[30]Claremont (California) Red Cross, "Adopt-a-Grandparent" information sheet (Mimeographed c. 1978).

[31]Dorothy Dister, "Adopting Grandparents," from Christian Education Shared Approaches, <u>Exploring the Bible</u>, ages 3-5, 5:4 (pt. 1), (March, April, May, 1980) (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication).

members, particularly teen-agers who are often isolated and alienated from their families. People of their grandparents' age might be able to be more understanding and have more time.[32]

D. **Life-Review / Faith-Journey**

An aspect of this project is to have a young and an old person dialogue together on life experiences and faith experiences. The most developed method for doing this grew out of the oral/local history movement, and has now spread to psychotherapy. Listed below are the major sources for this approach.

1. **Life Review/Reminiscence/Personal History/Local History/ Oral History/"Sharing Life Experiences".**

a. The Foxfire books--teen-agers gathered information about local history, customs, crafts, stories, etc. primarily in Appalachia.

b. Sara Jenkin's work, _Past Present_, has the best description of the process, especially as applied within a church setting.

c. "Life-Review Therapy" was developed by Myrna J. Lewis and Robert N. Butler (who originated the "life review" idea in 1963), and originally included groups comprised of 8

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[32]Kuhn, p. 260.

to 10 members: elderly persons over age 65, adults, young adults, and teenagers.

d. William M. Clements includes a good chapter of the use of reminiscence in <u>Care and Counseling of the Aging</u>.

e. Maggie Kuhn, <u>On Aging</u>, includes a chapter on life review.

f. Priscilla Ebersole describes in detail "Establishing Reminiscing Groups."

g. Developing an oral history program is described in detail by John A. Neuenschwander.

2. <u>Faith-Journey/Pilgrimage/Faith Exploration/ Life-Story Conversations/Sharing Faith Experiences</u>.

a. By far the most comprehensive approach uniting the ideas of sharing life experiences and faith experiences in a local church setting is found in Roy W. Fairchild's <u>Lifestory Conversations</u>.

b. "Ways to Help Folk Share Their Faith Journeys" was adapted from "A Story to Tell" (an evangelism training manual in the Reformed Church in America) and used in the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ in 1977.

c. The United Church of Christ's Office for Church Life and Leadership began a "Faith Exploration" program with resources for the local church in 1971. The program

continues with new resources published each year. In 1973, "Adventures in Faith XII" was published for groups to share their "Life Pilgrimage."

d. <u>Values and Faith</u> by Roland and Doris Larson is the best application of "values clarification" models for use with church groups. The book is full of practical and usable strategies to encourage persons to share, examine, and discover their faith.

E. <u>Dialogue/Personal Contact/Listening</u>

The interactional, person to person sharing model adopted for this project is based on the writings of several psychologists, counselors, theologians, philosophers, and social scientists. The relevance of each perspective to this project will be explored in Chapter 2.

Clearly the foundation for the approach is in the writings of Martin Buber, and in particular his works, <u>I and Thou</u> and <u>Between Man and Man</u>. Reuel Howe's contribution in <u>The Miracle of Dialogue</u> is to set personal contact in the Christian tradition, and Paul Tournier demonstrates its relevance to the daily life of Christian persons, as well as to the field of Pastoral Counseling, in his <u>The Meaning of Persons</u>. These three then, Buber, Howe, and Tournier,

provide the theoretical and practical basis upon which this model is constructed.

Secondary sources for this interactional model include Jourard's __Transparent Self__; several writings by Carl Rogers; Simons and Reidy, __The Human Art of Counseling__; Tom Oden's __The Intensive Group Experience__; the "will to relate" found in Charlotte and Howard Clinebell's __The Intimate Marriage__;[33] Ross Snyder's "power to understand what is going on" and "being with and for people;"[34] and Ignace Lepp provides an important description of "friendship" in his __The Ways of Friendship__, from which it is necessary to clarify the description of our title, "Grand __Friends__."

Suggested topics for sharing among grandfriends were inspired by the writings of Sidney B. Simon and other educators writing on "values clarification."

This project seeks to make a concrete application of the writings on personal contact, encounter, dialogue, sharing, and listening to a specific opportunity within the life of the church: the face to face meeting of youth and seniors.

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[33]Cited by McClellan, p. 19.

[34]Ross Snyder, __On Becoming Human__ (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), Chapter 5 and 6.

VII. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

The intent of this project is to demonstrate the benefit of placing young and old persons in face to face contact with one another for the purpose of sharing life and faith experiences. The willingness and common interests of persons in these age groups makes this model easy to use in any church, and qualitatively broadens the life of the church by demonstrating that we are indeed actually members, one of another.

Two pilot testings of this model are described and evaluated. One related high school young people with older people confined to a health-care facility. The other related high school young people with single seniors who were still living on their own. All seniors and youth were attending or members of the same church (though the two pilot projects were conducted at two different churches). Both tested programs were of limited duration, one of three months; the other of two months. A sustaining involvement was not intended, and indeed, the benefits to participants do not require continuing the relationship.

This project is intentionally limited to single older persons and senior-high age young persons. Although the theological rationale for the project ought to be

applied to interaction between and within other age groups
in the church, no attempt is made to do so here. It is
clear that the church ought to be intentional about breaking
down age-segmentation in its programming, and adopt programs
of its own which grow out of the faith experience and
opportunities present in its own congregation rather than
attempting to use a program contrived from without the
church.

VIII. PROCEDURE FOR INTEGRATION

It is commonly acknowledged in theology that God
works through history and through persons as they live their
lives. As Paul Tournier so movingly describes,

> In the other person who approaches us so closely that he
> becomes totally committed with regard to us, God himself
> is approaching us, and compelling us to commit ourselves
> also.[35]

The commitment of a young person and an older person
to spend significant time with each other is an occasion for
hearing, seeing, feeling the living God present where these
two have gathered together. It is precisely as these two
persons meet together that theology becomes lived.

So this project, especially in the second model,
which includes the explicit sharing of faith experiences,

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[35]Tournier, p. 161.

integrates theological and functional disciplines in
dialogue--the giving and receiving of one's life story, or
parts of it.

The dialogue method is perhaps best developed in
counseling where Personal contact is the initial requirement
for the counseling relationship,[36] but it is present in any
genuine friendship[37] or marriage.[38] The need for genuine
interpersonal contact--dialogue--is so pervasive, the common
life concerns of adolescents and seniors so remarkably
similar, and the feeling of trustworthiness, growing out of
the church environment, so much a given, that real personal
contact--and the "aha" discovery of God present in their
midst--very nearly flows freely from this design.

In order to integrate theology and personal contact,
it is important to lift up the divine presence as a real
possibility.[39] This is accomplished in the second model
through three group meetings with the participants. On
these occasions, questions may be answered and possibilities

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[36]Note Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral
Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), esp. pp.
57-64; and Joseph Simons and Jeanne Reidy, The Human Art of
Counseling (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971).

[37]See Lepp.

[38]See Tournier, pp. 136ff.

[39]As Tournier says, "Faith consists only in recognizing
who it is who speaks," p. 161.

may be revealed and shared which point toward the discovery of God's presence in the midst of conversations together.

Simply put, regardless of whether God is perceived or acknowledged by the grandfriends (youths and seniors), each is being given the opportunity to see what meaning life has for the other, and--implicit in that sharing--is the God who gives us each day of our lives.

Chapter 2 will present the theological basis for the project, while chapters 3 and 4 include how that basis was incorporated in the design and presentation of the two models. The final chapter will evaluate the extent of integration and its presence or absence in each of the models.

Chapter 2

FRIENDS IN DIALOGUE

I. FRIENDSHIP

Greater love has no man than this, that
a man lay down his life for his friends.
John 15:13

In the literal sense, Jesus is here revealing the
full extent of God's love for us--anticipating that he would
give his life that we might truly live. In the figurative
sense, whenever we reveal our lives, one to another, thou to
thou, we are participating in this love of Christ.
Paraphrasing, "Greater love has no person than this, that
she share her life in dialogue with her friends."

The two terms, "friend" and "dialogue" form the
theological foundation for the Grandfriend program.

"Friend" is rarely used with reference to God or
Jesus except in piety (e.g. "What a friend we have in
Jesus), yet it is full of richness for theology and for the
Church. Recently, Jürgen Moltmann opened the door to such
an application in a chapter entitled "Open Friendship."[1]
Moltmann examines the titles employed by the church to
describe Jesus, and finds them to be titles of dignity which

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[1]Jürgen Moltmann, The Passion for Life (Philadelphia:
Fortress Press, 1978), Chapter 4.

describe his authority and uniqueness, but distance him from the believer or follower. Moltmann writes,

> The exalted titles express no more than what Christ does--or suffers--for a person. They do not yet describe the fellowship he brings to men and women, new fellowship with God and with their neighbors. Whether prophet, priest, or king, whether substitute or representative, that new fellowship would be described on one side alone and would be merely functional, were not another "title" included, which can be no title, the name of friend.[2]

The appeal to friendship as a theological concept is long overdue. It has been hinted at in the past,[3] but has always been subsumed under "love." Given the ambiguity of "love" in common useage--which makes the word often meaningless--the appeal to develop "friendship" as a theological concept is all the more necessary.

Moltmann isolates the two places in the New Testament where Jesus is called "friend." In Luke 7:24, Jesus is portrayed as "a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Moltmann sees this description as combining "affection and respect," the two elements of friendship according to Immanuel Kant.[4]

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[2]Ibid., p. 55.

[3]Ignace Lepp, The Ways of Friendship (New York: Macmillan, 1966), especially Chapter 11.

[4]Immanuel Kant, "The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue," in his The Metaphysics of Morals, pt. 2, Para. 46f. (Indianapolis: Bobbes-Merrill, 1964), pp. 135ff. Cited in Moltmann, p. 51.

[Jesus] becomes the friend of sinners and tax collectors because of his joy in their common freedom--God's future.[5]

More importantly for our purposes is the passage from John 15, which opened this chapter, where Jesus describes his relation to the desciples as "friends." It is here that love and friendship meet:

Here the sacrifice of one's own life for one's friends is the highest form of love.[6]

"For the disciples to lay down their lives as Jesus is to do elevates them to a new dignity; the designation 'slave' no longer appropriately applies; they are rather, 'friends' of Jesus."[7]

A parallel is drawn for this project between "sharing one's life in dialogue" and "laying down one's life in love." One's existential status changes when you risk or give your life for another. Clearly "dying for' and "sharing with" another are vastly different occasions for friendship, but the parallel remains: in sharing life experiences in dialogue you are no longer isolated from the other as a slave or servant, you are in free _relation_ as a friend.

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[5]Moltmann, p. 56.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Eric Lane Titus, _The Message of the Fourth Gospel_ (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 198.

> Friendship is an unpretentious _relation_, for "friend" is
> not a designation of office, nor an exalted title, nor a
> function one must perform from time to time, nor a role
> one is supposed to play in society. _Friendship is a_
> _personal relation, "someone who likes you," someone you_
> _like._[8]

Although the relationships established in the

Grandfriend program between adolescents and seniors do not

approach the fullness of the friendship described between

Jesus and the disciples, or even between contemporary men

and women over many years of mutual sharing (mostly due to

absence of commitment, one to another, and the limited

duration of the relationship), the friendship model has

validity because of the emphasis on sharing life experiences

as mutually concerned persons, thou to thou, one with

another. It is my experience that even in these limited

expressions of friendship, through the face to face dialogue

of actual life experiences, the love of God may be revealed

to each person. This is confirmation of the experience

presented in Matthew 18:20. "For where two or three are

gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." For

Jesus Christ is the agent in the world who reconciles us,

one to another, and reveals the presence of God in our

midst.

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[8]Moltmann, p. 51, italics added.

It is entirely appropriate that this life sharing occur in the context of the church, for

> . . . followers of Jesus who give themselves in love for one another participate in the divine life while in the act of self-giving, and, while to the outsider it might appear that nothing more is involved than an act of humiliation, the Christian knows that in the act he has been raised to a new status: he has become the friend of God, and works in harmony with him. . . . This is the level of eternal life.[9]

II. DIALOGUE

"All real living is meeting"
- Buber

"There is no life without dialogue."
- Camus

A. Biblical and Ecclesiological Foundations

Friends do not just talk with one another, they communicate, and the form of that communication is dialogue. Paul Tournier writes that, "[Dialogue] is . . . the language of the Bible, of the parables of Christ, . . . of the Word of God which demands of us not a discussion but a personal decision. Again, it is the language of the human heart."[10] Dialogue is even more than this, however. Our becoming friends with Christ requires that we engage in dialogue:

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[9]Titus, pp. 198-199.

[10]Paul Tournier, The Meaning of Persons (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 132.

> We may seek the _ground_ of dialogue only where the ground
> of the _church itself_ can be found. The compelling
> force, _which constrains us to engage in dialogue_,
> convinces us of its necessity and therefore of its
> promise, can have come only from within, from the
> ground. That which constrains us is not something alien
> but something uniquely and solely our own. _God himself
> has taken the initiative when he entered into the
> "dialogue of salvation"_: "He first loved us" (1 John
> 4:19). _This divine initiative moves us "to extend this
> dialogue to all men without waiting, until we have been
> called to do so_," as the encyclical _Ecclesiam suam_ of
> Pope Paul VI has it.[11]

This finds correspondence in a linguistic phenomenon

noted by Amos N. Wilder, "The characteristics of the Old and

New Testament religion make dialogue an inevitable form of

verbal expression."[12]

From these three quotations the relationship between

the Biblical witness, friendship, and dialogue is

established. Dialogue is what joins us to God and one

another. Cultivation of dialogue and friendship in the

context of the church can be seen, then, to rise naturally

out of the church's foundation. Dialogue is by no means

contrived, but is of the essence of faith, grounded in

Christ and witnessed to by the very nature of Biblical

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[11]Ervin Valyi Nagy, "The Dialogical Nature of the
Church," in Ervin Valyi Nagy and Heinrich Ott, _Church as
Dialogue_(Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969), p. 13.
Italics in first sentence are in the original, all others
are added.

[12]Amos N. Wilder, _Early Christian Rhetoric, the Language
of the Gospel_ (London: 1964), p. 52, cited in Nagy, p. 13.
See also section on the Church in this Chapter.

religion. Friendship is the new relationship of freedom

resulting from sharing your life in dialogue with another.

Dialogue, according to the definition of Reuel Howe

which we are employing in this project,

> . . . is that address and response between persons in
> which there is a flow of meaning between them in spite
> of all the obstacles that normally would block the
> relationship. It is the interaction between persons in
> which one of them seeks to give himself as he is to the
> other, and seeks also to know the other as the other
> is.[13]

Such dialogue is by no means guaranteed in human

interaction, but its possibility is there whenever 2 or 3

persons gather together and overcome the blocks which would

otherwise thwart it.

B. **The Miracle of Dialogue**

Howe isolates five "meaning barriers" to

communication:[14]

1. Language--"Whenever anyone seeks to speak to

another he needs to use as much skill as he possesses in the

use of language and yet be aware that the very words he so

carefully chooses may block the effectiveness of his

communication."

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[13]See note 9 in Chapter 1.

[14]The following quotations are from Reuel L. Howe, The
Miracle of Dialogue (New York: Seabury Press, 1963),
Chapter 2.

2. Images--"The images which participants in communication have on one another or of the subject matter can effectively obstruct the communication."

3. Anxieties--either personal or related to the subject matter.

4. Defensiveness (e.g. self-justification, prejudice, insecurities, compulsiveness)

5. Contrary purposes--contrary definitions on the purpose of communication among partners (e.g. discussion or action).

Overlaying all five barriers is one's ontological need: self-concern, built into human existence which searches for affirmation and reasurance. Because of it, ". . . we need to be known and to know, to be loved and to love. . . . If true communication between person and person is to occur, each must accept his own and the other's need for affirmation."[15] This is the foundation for "listening with care"[16] where each person listens not only _to_ a story, but _with_ their own story.

The miracle of dialogue is that it occurs at all. In designing a program depending upon communication between youth and older persons, every barrier to meaning and

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[15]Ibid., p. 26.

[16]For definition see page 13 above.

sharing can be expected to appear. The miracle is that they can be overcome, and genuine dialogue, even if only fleeting, can occur.

> Communication is accomplished, however, not when the barriers are wiped away, but when they are accepted as part of the communication. . . . The resistance to understanding has to be accepted as a part of the dialogue. It becomes the very *curriculum* of the dialogue--that is, a part of its very subject matter. When the two sides are willing to accept this curriculum, there is a real possibility that the dialogue will accomplish its miracles.[17]

In fact to accept the barriers as part of the dialogue is to accept each other's personhood, each other's humanness, each other's *thou*. Then, and only then, can dialogue work the miracle of bringing persons into being:

> The person of the other demands, by his very existence, that he be acknowledged as a *thou* in his own right, as a *thou* to my *I* and as an *I* to himself.[18]

The purpose of this project is the same as the purpose of dialogue itself, ". . . to bring the meanings that come out of men's living in the world to a meeting of the meanings that come out of the encounter between God and man in Christ."[19] Please recall that this "meeting" is friendship, the sharing of life in dialogue as Jesus Christ lay down his life in love.

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[17]Howe, p. 48, italics added.

[18]Ibid., p. 65.

[19]Ibid., p. 65.

The principle underlying dialogue is: "He who loses his life for my sake and the Gospel shall find it." This means that we enter into relationship not for the purpose of gaining, but for the purpose of giving, with the prayer that we may lose our pretensions, our defensive need to justify ourselves, and gain, instead, a reasurance of life by having it affirmed in our relationship with another.[20]

C. __God and Love__

Before leaving the subject of dialogue, explicit mention needs to be made of two closely related topics which have been cited in connection with dialogue: 1) The I-Thou relation, and 2) Love.

1) __Martin Buber and I-Thou__. The interactional/ relational model adopted for this project is based on Buber's __I and Thou__, as is Reuel Howe's definition of dialogue which we employ. The value of this project lies in each person's discovery that he or she is a Thou, relating to another Thou substantially older or younger than him or herself and in that relation both are connected to the "eternal Thou," God.

Our daily "life in society" directs all our attention to the differences between human beings. This is the I-It relation. The aim of this project is to reveal, in some small way, the other possible relation, I-Thou. Buber writes:

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[20]Ibid., p. 97.

> Individuality makes its appearance by being differentiated from other individualities.
>
> A person makes his appearance by entering into relation with other persons.
>
> The one is the spiritual form of natural detachment, the other the spiritual form of natural solidarity of connexion.
>
> The aim of self-differentiation is to experience and to use, and the aim of these is "life," that is, dying that lasts the span of a man's life.
>
> The aim of relation is relation's own being, that is, contact with the *Thou*. For through contact with every *Thou* we are stirred with a breath of the *Thou*, that is, of eternal life."[21]

To the extent that participants in this project engaged in I-Thou relationship, one would expect to find some breakdown of the differentiations "young person" and "old person" and the affirmation of "person" regardless of age. This will be examined in Chapter 5.

Once again, the value of relating I-Thou is to uncover the realm of reality which stands in marked distinction to the world of things in which we spend so much of our lives. Buber elaborates on this importance:

> He who takes his stand in relation, shares in a reality, that is, in a being that neither merely belongs to him nor merely lies outside him. All reality is an activity in which I share without being able to appropriate for myself. Where there is no sharing, there is no reality. Where there is self-appropriation there is no reality. The more direct contact with the *Thou*, the fuller is the sharing.
>
> The *I* is real in virtue of its sharing in reality. The fuller its sharing the more real it becomes.[22]

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[21]Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 62-63, italics in original.

[22]Ibid., p. 63, italics in original.

As a consequence of participating in this "shared reality of being," persons focus on their commonness and accept one another in each one's humanness, transcending differences. This is, then, a description of and prescription for dialogue. It can then be seen that dialogue is grounded not in individuals, but in God, not in distinction, but in unity.

The appearance of the Thou is very subtle and can only, in a project such as this, be hoped for, and signs of Thou's presence can only be implied, not proven. For as Buber says, "How powerful is the unbroken world of It, and how delicate are the appearances of the Thou![23]

Yet, the Thou is not innocently hoped for, for in the Grand Friend program, the primary activity is sharing, talking one with another about the experiences each has had in life. For Buber, talk is essential to cultivate real relation:

> . . . I and Thou take their stand not merely in relation, but also in the solid give-and-take of talk. The moments of relation are here, and only here, bound together by means of the element of the speech in which they are immersed. Here what confronts us has blossomed into the full reality of the Thou. Here alone, then, as reality that cannot be lost, are gazing and being gazed upon, knowing and being known, loving and being loved.[24]

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[23]Ibid., p. 98.

[24]Ibid., p. 103.

And we could add, "befriending and being befriended."

The delicate appearance of the Thou in the conversations between grandfriends unveils reality, however briefly, and unites the persons to the eternal Thou, God. This reality is the reality of true being and of love: love which unites us to God and one another.

Ultimately, this project rests upon the love of God, for friendship, dialogue, and the caring community are grounded in the love of God.

2) _Love_. The similarities between friendship, dialogue, and I-Thou relationship are many, but their common origin and ultimate aspiration is love, the love of God. Daniel Day Williams is right when he says, "Our knowledge of the love of God must come from his self-disclosure. It is not a projection from our human love."[25] But alongside it we must place these words of Martin Buber, ". . . in each _Thou_ we address the eternal Thou."[26] These two are reconciled in the truth that God is self-disclosed in each Thou. The discovery of this truth is the "aha experience" of participating in the love of God as a subject, as a person, at-one-with oneself, the other person, and God.

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[25]Daniel Day Williams, _The Spirit and the Forms of Love_ (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 122.

[26]Buber, p. 101.

Heinrich Ott puts it this way, "God gives us to understand that in our epoch, when man it seems can do everything, God discloses himself and is to be found not at the limits of human power, but in everyday human relationships."[27]

Williams writes, "Love for another person opens the way to a kind of knowledge which can never be given without it. . . . Love is light, insight, and understanding. It reaches the other's being and yields an awareness otherwise impossible."[28] It does so, for love is of God, or as it is put in the Gospel of John, "God is love."

The context in which persons truly are freed to love one another is the church, the body of Christ, the caring community. The energy which draws persons into relationship and community, and which preserves the caring community from the forces which would destroy it is love. ". . . love is not one emotion among others. It is the whole person's growth in power to enter into community. It is his will to belong."[29]

This community of love is the church of Jesus Christ, and it is the locus of love in this world from which is emerging the kingdom of God.

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[27]Heinrich Ott, God (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), pp. 18-19.

[28]Williams, p. 291.

[29]Ibid., p. 291, italics added.

III. THE CHURCH

The church is the community of friends who are called to engage one another in dialogue and live in the love of God. As such, the church is the necessary context for the sharing of life experiences among persons of all ages, and hence of youth and seniors, in dialogue. It is important to recognize that the church is the sole and unique setting for dialogue. Other institutions in society do not provide opportunities for persons to interact as subjects but only as objects. Society's interest in persons is always instrumental, whereas the church's is intrinsic.

Two Biblical orientations of the church are incorporated in this project: the Gospel concept of the "body of Christ" and Paul's concept of koinonia: In the church we are members of one body, and as such comprise the caring community of Christ. This community is manifest when two or more gather together in dialogue. Indeed, Ervin Nagy states, "The church in its true nature is dialogue."[30]

"Only the nature of the church itself can provide the real ground, the content, and the direction of

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[30]Nagy, p. 35, italics in original.

dialogue."[31] Or more succinctly, "Church is dialogue and dialogue is the ongoing life of the Church."[32]

In dialogue one encounters God in relation to oneself and the other; indeed, one joins with the other and participates with God, the eternal Thou. This is analogous to being "members one of another" in the body of Christ, united through Christ to God. That is, to truly be a part of the body of Christ is to actually participate (κοινων) in Christ's I-Thou relation with God. God is therefore immediately accessible through dialogue with the members of the caring community. The reality is circular: dialogue begets community begets dialogue. ". . . the nurturing of our response to God's love is the work of the church. Our responsibility is to love Him. We are to love God by loving one another, and in loving one another we introduce one another to God."[33]

In the words of Heinrich Ott, "The unique dialogical relationship between God and man is, after all, like this: where men, in the spirit of God, talk to each other about God, there God does not merely remain the third person talked about, who is given to one only through the mediation

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[31]Ibid., p. 17.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Reuel L. Howe, Herein is Love (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1961), p. 45.

of the other, but he is "in the midst of them.'"[34] And, of
course, this truth is not limited to "talk about God," but
is true for any genuine dialogue, for any I-Thou relation.
Where two or three are gathered in dialogue, the Church
comes into full life as the body of Christ in the world.

Lest we get off the track, it is crucial to recall
these words from Eduard Schweitzer, ". . . when we speak of
the body of Christ, God himself and his passage through the
world is the focus of interest, not the redeemed individual
or the church as an entity in itself, contemplating
itself."[35]

In summary then, the church exists wherever two or
more people participate in the eternal Thou, however
fleetingly, through dialogue, thereby manifesting the living
body of Christ, the caring community of love, engaging in
the "dialogue of salvation."[36]

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[34]Heinrich Ott, "Protestant Reflections on the Doctrine of the Church," in Nagy and Ott, p. 88.

[35]Eduard Schweitzer, "Die Kirche als Leib Christi in den paulischen Antilegomena," _Theologische Literatur Zeitung_, 86:4 (1961) 254, cited in Nagy, p. 30.

[36]This phrase is used by Nagy, p. 13, quoted in context on page 37.

Chapter 3

MODEL I:
YOUTH AND INSTITUTIONALIZED SINGLE SENIORS--
THE 1978-79 GRANDFRIEND PROGRAM

I. BACKGROUND

This project grew directly out of ministerial
calling on elderly shut-ins while serving as Minister of
Youth and Program at the Claremont United Church of Christ,
Congregational. The residents of the Lodge at Mount San
Antonio Gardens Congregational Home, while requiring nursing
care, were some of the most vital, alive, and interesting
people I'd ever met. In most cases their minds were
extremely sharp, and kept that way through study groups,
interest groups, reading, and correspondence, but their
bodies were confining them to a care facility. Most of
these people did not have any relatives living close by, and
many only saw children or grandchildren once or twice a
year, if that often.

Conversing with these persons was always a rich
experience for me, especially hearing them tell of the many
and varied experiences and accomplishments of their lives.
It occurred to me to ask some of them if they would be
interested in establishing a relationship with a high school
age young person, just to share about their experiences. I

recalled a time when I was in junior high school that a neighbor who was a Professor of Physics retired from M.I.T. I began to spend afternoons following school, listening to his stories about teaching, inventing, World Wars I and II, and adventures at their Island on Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. I truly enjoyed these visits which would sometimes last several hours. In fact, I was captivated by learning about another's life and seeing the world through his eyes. If I had so enjoyed this experience, perhaps so would the high school youth with whom I worked at the Claremont Church. The possibilities seemed to be begging for actualization.

I envisioned young people and shut-ins sitting down together to share their life experiences, and establishing a real friendship accross the generations. The elderly had stories to tell, and the youth had lives to live. There was the matching of needs drawing these two age-groups together, complementing one another: The young eager to see just how someone manages to, in Ross Snyder's phrase, "bring off a

life world;"[1] the elderly needing to review the events of their lives.[2]

There was such an obvious match of needs and interests, and I had so naturally shared with my retired neighbor, that I really assumed all one needed to do was put any young person together with an older person, and the sharing would begin. This sharing would lead to friendship. The sharing of significant life events which had helped shape the faith and meaning of the senior's life, would then help to develop the same in the young person. I desperately wanted the mutuality and complementarity of interests and needs to do the work. I figured this would free the program to grow out of the human condition of each person of these different generations. About the only concession I would make in the flurry of this enthusiastic idealism, was to survey the interests and hobbies of both groups, and try to match individuals according to these interests and hobbies. This, then, is the background which led to the original program in May, 1978.

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[1]Ross Snyder, On Becoming Human (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967) p. 77.

[2]For the benefit to elderly persons of reviewing their lives, see the article by Myrna J. Lewis and Robert N. Butler, "Life Review Therapy," Geriatrics, 29:11 (November 1974) 165-173. For illustrations of the involvement of youth with the elderly, see the above article by Lewis and Butler, p. 172 f., and also Donald F. Clingan Aging Persons in the Community of Faith (Indianapolis: Indiana Commission on the Aging and Aged, 1975), p. 21.

II. CHANGE IN MODEL

In July, 1978, it was suggested by one of the activities directors at the Health Care Facility at Pilgrim Place,[3] that the Grand Friend Program might be adapted to work with the more severely limited seniors confined to that facility.

Obvious benefits of this approach were centered on the greater need these elderly persons had for contact with young people, and the reality that the young people could actually do needed things for these people: such as, read to those for whom it was impossible or difficult, assist in writing letters, and finances.

Obvious difficulties from the start were seen as: senility, a "hospital-like" environment, the emotionally difficult recognition that this was the "final stop or stage" before death, scheduling visits around the facility schedule, and the need to keep visits fairly short.

Nonetheless, it was an opportunity to test out a revised understanding of the model in a situation where the

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[3]Pilgrim Place is a residential retirement community in Claremont, California, for those who have given service to the church (primarily as ministers and missionaries), and is affiliated with the United Church of Christ. In 1978-79 the health care facility was McCabe Nursing Home.

activity directors of the Health Care Facility were eager for the opportunity.

III. BEGINNINGS

On July 23, 1978, an informal presentation was made to the Pilgrim (senior high youth) Fellowship of the Claremont U.C.C. with one of the activities directors of the Facility present. Sufficient interest was shown to continue the planning process.

Busy late summer schedules and the start of the school year intervened to delay the start of the program. In the Fall, young people were again invited to participate, and indicated some of their own interests, hobbies, school subjects of interest, and plans for the future (college and career). Both activity directors at the Facility asked the residents if they were interested in participating in the project. Those who responded favorably were interviewed briefly by the directors as to their interests, hobbies, and life experiences which might be of interest to the youth, and would be of assistance in matching grandfriends.

On November 20 and 22, the activity directors met with me and we matched up the young people and the seniors by interest, as best we could. Initially there were 11 grandfriend pairings.

Then, on November 25, 1978, most of the youth participants came to the Health Care Facility for a training and orientation session. Following a presentation of the hopes and possibilities of the program, adapted from the original proposal, one activity director described the procedures of the Facility which included suggestions as to what might be done during a visit. (The outline of this presentation is found in Appendix A.)

Following the presentations, the activity director introduced each young person to his or her grandfriend. So the program began that day, and within the next ten days for the young people who could not attend the Nov. 25th meeting.

IV. DESIGN

All youth participants agreed to visit their grandfriend at least twice per month but were encouraged to do so once a week. There was no suggested length for each visit, though most were in the 30 to 60 minutes range. Long visits were too tiring for the residents. The activity director compiled a list of "things you may do during the visit,"[4] which were the only specific suggestions or guidelines given to the youth. No suggestions were given to the senior residents of the facility. It was assumed that

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[4]See Appendix A.

detailed suggestions would make the model too contrived, and might preclude a "natural friendship" from developing.

Eight senior high girls were paired with eight female residents, and three senior high boys were paired with three male residents. An attempt was made to match grandfriends by interests, vocations, hobbies, and countries lived in or visited. This was done on the assumption that sharing would begin and blossom with similar interests between grandfriends.

Scheduling of visits was the responsibility of the youth participants, and was most often done on a weekday afternoon after school. Visits also had to be coordinated to fit the Facility's schedule and the resident's own preferences. There was no minimum number of visitation hours set.

Participants were on their own after the project began. Unless a problem developed, the usual way to check on participants was for me to inquire about how things were going when I saw youth participants on Sunday evening at the Senior High Fellowship meetings at church. Due to severe time limitations, the activity director at the health care facility rarely encountered the youth. This absence of continuing contact and regular support had noticeable effect on the program, which will be addressed below.

The program was intended to run for two months, December, 1978 and January, 1979. The final session for youth participants, however, was not held until Feb. 25, 1979. Additional time was needed to compensate for visits missed during the holiday season, but in fact, most participants were no longer meeting regularly with their grand friends. There was not a clear statement of how long visits should continue.

V. EVALUATION

a) The adaptation of the original model from involving extremely vital older persons who had some physical disabilities to older persons with severe disabilities which confined them to a health care facility had major implications.

First, several of the seniors varied in their mental alertness. The young people were thereby exposed to much repetition in the life experiences shared by the seniors, and some were not always recognized by their senior grandfriend being mistaken as old friends, children or grandchildren.

Second, the health care facility was acknowledged to be "the final residence" for each older person. Once admitted, it was only a matter of time before death. The fact that death was "the only hope" for these persons was an

extremely difficult reality for many of the youth, and was not adequately addressed in the project.

Third, the severity of mental and physical handicaps meant that it was not possible for all youth and all senior participants to gather as a whole group, so the benefits of intergenerational group dialogue as well as a communal sense of "everyone sharing in the project together" were not possible.

Fourth, these very handicaps of the older residents of the health care facility were opportunities for the youth participants to feel useful and needed. Examples include a youth reading and writing letters for her blind grandfriend, and taking residents for short walks or wheel chair excursions outside the facility.

b) Too much burden was placed on the process. With one or two exceptions, relationships did not involve really mutual sharing, nor did they blossom into fruitful dialogue about life or faith experiences. Instead they remained on the surface. The idealistic expectation that young and old alike would discover their similarities and automatically become "friends across the years" remained an idealized hope.

The purpose and even the expectations of participants was nebulous and unspecified. The two or three

young people with independent initiative seized the
opportunity and used it for their own growth, but the
majority were "lost in a sea" of ambiguous instruction,
little support, and unclear objectives other than to spend
time with their grandfriends.

The fixation on avoiding contrivance prevented
cultivation of an organic process which would naturally grow
out of church life. By not grounding the model in the life
of the church, too much burden was placed on the process to
create relationship among these youth and seniors.
Paradoxically the process was contrived because it was not
rooted or connected anywhere. Hence the expectations were
not met because they were never really articulated.

Consequences of this ambiguity were lack of
commitment on the part of some youth to the program
(demonstrated by infrequent visits), absence of specific
guidelines and suggestions for visitation which would
encourage mutual sharing of life experiences, confusion as
to the purpose or point of grandfriends, and no sense of
completion to the program (for you can't complete something
unless it has first been defined). It became clear by the
end of this running of the model that the most contrived
thing is a process without specific expectations.

c. Despite the truism, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else," the original hopes and hunches that youth and seniors would have their lives enriched by contact with one another, seem to have occurred in spite of the process, as can be seen in the comments of some youth participants three and 1/2 years following the program. (The seniors were not interviewed).

> It made me feel good that I made a commitment to go out and help somebody. To go out and do something for someone else.

> I think it was pretty neat. . . . I really like going there and talking to her, it was enjoyable. I felt good, you know, I thought I was helping her out by talking to her. . . . One of the reasons I kept on going [was], I thought it would be good for me too. . . .

The youth participants did learn some things about aging from their involvement with the seniors:

> The richness of their lives . . . is inspiring; to know what all can be done in your life.

> I would hope that when I become her age that I would be in her frame of mind, I mean, so positive and so thankful to be where she was.

> I told myself that I want to be content with growing old, try to accept growing older, try to accept the things that go wrong, and have a positive outlook.

The two biggest problems with this program were related to the design. First, there were no group meetings with all participants, youth and seniors. It would have been logistically difficult to arrange in the health care facility, but not impossible, and would have provided the

"missing link" to the real context of the program, the
church, which was only implied, never revealed or
demonstrated. At the very least, the youth participants
needed to have group meetings for support and assistance, as
their comments reveal,

> If whoever is leading it could meet with the kids more
> often and suggest things that they can talk about [that
> would have made it better]. [My grandfriend] was a
> little senile, so a little guidance . . . how to relate
> to them best, and get the most out of your relationship
> [would have been helpful].

The second major problem concerned ambiguous
expectations. The young people had been led to expect a
very fulfilling and rewarding mutual friendship to develop,
and when it did not, it became difficult to continue the
visits.

> I stopped going after a while. I don't remember
> why, . . . and after I stopped going I felt really,
> really bad. . . .
>
> Maybe that one hour a week . . . needed to be developed
> into something more. If you . . . really got along
> . . . and started meaning a lot to each other it could
> have been developed into something more substantial.
> But just an hour a week; I was questioning whether . . .
> I [was] really doing any good with this person. How
> much does it mean to her? I guess I questioned whether
> it was worth it?

The youth had an expectation of being able to have a
more mutual relationship and of sharing more things together
which simply did not materialize, and was demoralizing.
Given the reality of older persons confined to a health
facility for the final stage of their lives, I do not

believe that such mutual friendships <u>could</u> develop except with great persistence and the creation of a supportive environment to sustain the young person's involvement and nurture his or her commitment.

Even the more clearly articulated expectation for mutual sharing of life experiences was often dropped in exchange for a "helping" model in which the old people were "consumers" and the young people "providers" of help or assistance.

Still, the <u>contact</u> between old and young, in spite of the problems and ambiguities, justifies this program. As will be seen in the next chapter, many of these problems were addressed in the second model with success, though the older people in this second project were not confined to a health facility. A comparative evaluation of the two models, referring back to the introduction and theological justifications, will follow in Chapter 5.

VI. SUMMARY

The best summary of this project was provided by one of the youth participants shortly following the conclusion of the program. It was presented as a "meditation" during a "Youth Sunday" worship service at the Claremont Church May 20, 1979. It is an articulate commentary on the program. It presents the real needs for intergenerational contact,

supporting the primary rationale for the grandfriend

program, while it correctly questions some of the

assumptions and expectations, revealing them to be contrived

and inappropriate.

> A few of my friends have something which I've always
> envied. It is not what you might expect. It has
> nothing to do with money or status. What they have is a
> set of grandparents who are nearby. They have the
> built-in opportunity to form a relationship with older
> people. To them, grandparents are people to whom they
> can turn when they need advice or friendship. Grand-
> parents often have insight into how to deal with various
> situations.
>
> Unfortunately, for most of us, grandparents are
> people whom we visit once a year, while putting on our
> best manners. They are people we receive cards and
> presents from at birthdays and Christmas time. And
> often, that is about all. Therefore, if we want to have
> the benefits of this type of intergenerational
> relationship, we have to reach the people through other
> means.
>
> A typical statement is that there are many people
> out there who would just love someone to talk to. So,
> as far as I can tell, both generations would love to
> come in contact with each other, but don't know where to
> begin.
>
> Both groups seem to think that the other is not
> interested.
>
> Friday night, a group of students and I were
> visiting a friend who lives in Pilgrim Place. When the
> topic of my sermon came up, his reaction was, "But
> young people don't want to come in contact with older
> people, do they? Really, don't young people want to
> leave when they are with old people?" We could not
> convince him differently, until finally we said, "We're
> here, aren't we." We wouldn't be here talking to you if
> we weren't interested." Even then I'm not sure he was
> convinced. Yet our interest was present and being
> demonstrated. Both groups are interested and each needs
> to be aware that the other is also.
>
> Another factor which is important in beginning any
> new relationship is a basis on which to relate.
>
> Earlier this year the Grand Friend program was
> created to get the members of the youth group into
> contact with the residents of McCabe. The plan was to

pair us up with one another and have each pair become friends. It was a good idea but it fell through with most of the pairs. The situation was too contrived. It was nearly impossible to walk in and immediately form a meaningful relationship with a complete stranger. Our only purpose in being together was to become friends, although often we knew of no real basis for a relationship.

However, if a purpose exists in being together, a meaningful relationship may easily emerge. I used to spend time every week helping a resident of Pilgrim Place with his correspondence. Initially, I went only to write for him because it was difficult for him to write due to his increasing blindness. As time elapsed, we began to get to know each other. He would stop in the midst of dictating a letter and tell me a story about the person to whom he was writing. I gradually reached the point where I looked forward to the afternoons I spent with him. Through working together, we had formed a very special friendship.

Our church with its wide diversity of ages could be a good setting in which to form intergenerational relationships. Yet our church, instead of providing situations which encourage this, tends to keep the different groups separate. The various fellowship groups range from Junior High PF up to the oldest group, The Contemporary Club. Each of the groups tends to be distinct and separate.

Granted, these groups and fellowships are very important. PF has been an important factor in my life, and it was what sparked my interest in this church. But a way of bringing the various age groups together, an intergenerational fellowship is needed as well.

Intergenerational relationships can be special to all of those involved. During the summer it is nice to feel the coolness of winter, and during the winter it's nice to have the warmth of summer around.

Chapter 4

MODEL II:
YOUTH AND SINGLE SENIORS RESIDING AT HOME--
THE 1982 GRANDFRIEND PROGRAM

I. BACKGROUND

The primary difference between this model and the
previous one is that the seniors involved here are not
confined to a health care facility, but live in their own
home or apartment, and are quite independent. The seniors
were all widows or widowers, and during the time of the
project, all but one of them were largely confined to their
home or immediate neighborhood due to health or physical
limitations. They were all mentally alert, and showed no
signs of senility or other mental limitations.

This primary difference, of involving homebound
rather than institutionalized seniors, came about due to my
move from Claremont, a community with many retirement homes
easily accessible, to the Palos Verdes Peninsula, where
there are no retirement homes, and even a sense of community
is problematic due to the geography. Hence, a different
model was needed. The use of this second model also
contributes to the generalizability of the Grandfriend
Program to churches in communities where there are no
retirement homes or health facilities for seniors within
easy access.

The secondary differences of this model concern the
design of the project. As will be detailed below, group
sessions with all participants, suggested topics for sharing
among grandfriends, and a project for grandfriends to
complete together, were included in this model. These
changes were made to "unburden" the process, clarify
activities and expectations, and correct some of the
difficulties present in the earlier model.

II. BEGINNINGS

In the fall of 1981, the outreach committee of the
senior high fellowship, United Church Youth (U.C.Y.), of the
Neighborhood Church in Palos Verdes Estates, California was
approached with the possibility of participating in the
Grandfriend Program. Several young people were particularly
interested. Due to my schedule, the busyness of the school
year involvements for the young people, and other church
related events, the start of the program was delayed until
the summer of 1982.

In early July I approached several young people,
most of whom had indicated interest previously, about
participating in the program during the summer. Five girls
(Juniors in and a recent Graduate from high school)
volunteered. Unfortunately for this model, no boys chose to
participate.

At the same time I contacted several single seniors from the church to solicit their involvement. Four women and one man, all in their seventy's, agreed to participate. It should be mentioned that most seniors were quite willing to become involved, but were baffled by the possibility that young people wanted to participate with them, and astounded that young people might be interested in them. One or two seniors were almost flattered at the invitation and prospect.

My involvement as the associate minister of the Church played an important part in the willingness of both youth and seniors to risk involvement in the program. I cannot help but feel that the fact that I was trusted and respected as being a "caring person" and pastor assisted many in overcoming hesitations to involvement. Some people, I am sure, became involved in the program as a personal gesture of support to me and my ministry. This personal involvement of the minister may be particularly important to the grandfriend program as a whole, and in its adoption to other church settings.

III. DESIGN

On Sunday afternoon, July 18, 1982, four youth and four seniors--one youth and one senior were unable to attend--met for an orientation meeting (a detailed synopsis

of that initial session is given in Appendix B). Seniors
and youth met in dyads and shared one or two items from
their personal information forms (see Appendix B), which had
been completed previously. I made a few remarks about
listening and sharing skills to assist the conversation, and
stressed that both youth and seniors were expected at times
to listen and at times to share.

A five-page packet was then distributed to each
person (see Appendix C) which outlined the purpose and
expectations of the program, and gave detailed suggestions
for each of the three parts of the model.

The _Purpose_ stated was to cultivate personal contact
between generations within the church to: 1) share life
experiences in dialogue, 2) share faith experiences in
dialogue, and 3) work on a project.

The _Expectations_ were for at least eight hours of
meeting between grandfriends, equal attention to the three
parts of the model, equal time for grandfriends to talk and
listen, attendance at the full group meetings, and joint
responsibility for scheduling meetings.

Grandfriends were then paired up. There was an
attempt to match old and young people with similar interests
(e.g. music, travel), based upon information given on the
youth or adult "Personal Information" forms. The
grandfriend pairs were then given about fifteen minutes to
become better acquainted and arrange their own meeting time.

After scheduling two "all participant" group meetings, one for midway through the program, and the other to conclude the program, the first meeting concluded.

I provided some special support in the case of one of the pairs, primarily to reassure the senior participant, and assisted in conveying communication from seniors to youth when regular contact was difficult or unforeseen circumstances intervened.

The mid-way group meeting was very poorly attended due to vacations which affected the youth, and illness or transportation problems which affected the seniors. The principle purposes for the meeting were to have been: to build a greater sense of fellowship and mutual ownership, of commitment, to the program, and to serve as a progress report on the projects being worked upon by the grandfriends.

A word about the projects is necessary. It was felt that the assignment to jointly work on a project would help focus the energies of both young and old in a grandfriend pair, and relieve some of the pressure on the verbal sharing

aspects of the project.[1] Each pair was free to create their own project, but suggestions were given.[2] Grandfriends were to report their choice of a project to me by their second session. In fact, it was necessary in most cases to make special phone calls to learn of the projects.

In between group sessions, there was little communication about the grandfriend meetings, and how things were going.

The concluding group meeting was held in a senior's apartment and included all participants save one youth who was out of town. The participants gathered to refreshments and light, unstructured conversation. We began the structured session with each grandfriend introducing his or her grandfriend and some of what they had come to know about each other. This was very helpful, and created a real sense of fellowship and participation among all involved in the program. Only two of the pairs had completed their projects, but all pairs had an opportunity to either present

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[1]See Chapter 3, sermon by participant, esp. ". . . if a purpose exists in being together, a meaningful relationship may easily emerge." The project was such a pragmatic "purpose." For an excellent presentation on caring for the elderly by offering opportunities to be creative, similar to the idea of a "project" used here, please see the section, "Working with Care" by Henri Nouwen, "Care and the Elderly," in Aging and the Human Spirit, (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1981), pp. 295-296.

[2]See Appendix C, "Suggestions for Projects."

or talk about the projects. Then after each person briefly shared an early memory from his or her life, the session concluded with everyone commenting upon and informally evaluating the merit of the program.

The project technically ran for eight weeks, from the initial to the concluding group meeting, though one pair started about three weeks late, and a couple others met at least once following the concluding group gathering.

IV. EVALUATION

Participants had an opportunity to express how they felt about the program towards the end of the final group meeting. In order to have a more candid report, though, most participants, seniors and youth, were interviewed again, either singly or in small groups. Evaluative comments came from these two settings and will be identified only as coming from a senior or youth participant. The topics of the comments will structure this section. No attempt will be made here to offer an overall critique of the program, or suggest a revised model for further use. These concerns will be addressed in Chapter 5.

1. Participants enjoyed the program and benefited by getting to know someone from the older or younger generation.

. . . I started out this summer taking on a bunch of
responsibilities, and . . . out of everything else I've
done, out of all the volunteer work I've done this
summer, this is what I enjoyed the most. (Youth)

I think it has been enjoyable, I met some young people I
didn't know before, and . . . it's been very
interesting. (Senior)

Yes, I enjoyed her very much; we did get along very
well. . . . Just learning a little about her family,
that interested me. I think it is a necessity almost
that young people are more involved with older people,
because the older people are becoming more and more and
more, and they need. . . . someone to be interested in
them. Even those young people who don't have
grandparents, they could find some older person to have
an association with, and it would be beneficial to them,
I know it would, for both of them. (Senior)

I really liked hearing about her background, her life,
'cause it was just fascinating. . . . We got a lot out
of the talking. . . . I think I'd do it again. It was
really interesting, I got a lot out of it. (Youth)

2. The young people, particularly, gained a new and
experiential awareness of aging. Some of the comments
reveal a sudden discovery, the "aha" awareness that, "my
grandfriend was once young like me and felt things somewhat
like I do," or "I will really grow old someday myself."
There was, it appears, a fleeting awareness, revealed in the
comments below, that "we are both persons, my grandfriend
and I, and even though we are of different times and at
different places on the journey of life, we are both
persons, fellow travelers."

She had this one picture from a play, and she was
dressed up like George Washington. She looked like a
little boy in the play, and it made me think that they

had fun too. . . . So I guess times are pretty much the same, except maybe just that society changes a little, but we're pretty much the same. (Youth)

I always kind of had the feeling that, "O, you know, the old people, they're just old people; they never really had a childhood." I mean . . . you think of old people as being old, not as being teenagers and going out on dates and things like that. But then I go to thinking [what it would be like] if I get that age, and talk with someone 16 or something. [It would] just be kind of strange. (Youth)

What I got out of it, from the other women who were involved in the group, is that they didn't mind being old, and they weren't afraid of dying. From my point of view, being old is really scarry. At my age, . . . I almost feel guilty that I am young when I'm with old people. . . . I just automatically put my own mind into theirs and think, "O, they must just be jealous of me because I'm having so much fun and doing all these wonderful things." I never really saw it from their point of view; I always thought that they were seeing it from mine. And it is good to know that it isn't the way I thought it was. . . . That was really positive, and now I know that it is possible to become old and accept yourself that way: realize you're old and not worry about it so much. (Youth)

3. Due to vacations and illness, the grandfriends generally did not spend the minimum of eight hours together.[3] In the cases not related to illness, it was the youth participants who did not follow through on the commitment.

Well, I felt like because you said to spend eight hours, that's the only reason I felt we should have, otherwise I felt completely satisfied.

The above comment reveals a commitment to me, but not to the grandfriend or the program. A similar concern was voiced by

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[3]The average was six hours.

one of the seniors and directed at both old and young

participants:

> I was amazed at how few people out of the group
> really had anything to show for the meetings that we had
> had, and I was rather disappointed in that. I felt that
> the group could have been more responsive to you and to
> the project.

> Some young people at least recognized that there was

a problem even if they didn't do anything about it.

> I was [too] busy. . . . We could have done . . . so
> much better and so much longer if I hadn't have been so
> tired. . . . So, if we continue I don't plan to be busy.
> That would be the only thing I have to say, you couldn't
> be very busy [to do this project].

> I just wish I'd showed up after coming back from
> vacation. I feel bad about that.

> Although these youth experienced some concern at not

being more responsible, others seemed to be totally

oblivious to the problem. Several of the seniors, however,

were quite frustrated with the lack of concern and

commitment from the youth.

> I had a hard time getting together with [my
> grandfriend]. She promised me three times she'd be here
> at a certain time, and I got all of the craft work up
> that we were going to work together, and it took quite a
> bit of time to get it all out, and she didn't show up.
> Finally she was going to call me back, and she never
> did.

> I did have trouble [getting together with my
> grandfriend, and] . . . I felt she was not either
> particularly interested or not very reliable.

> In both models, the youth were not very

conscientious to fulfill the responsibilities of the

project. At least one young person experienced the sense of obligation to detract from the intended purpose of the program.

> The first [group] meeting we had to circulate around and see and meet different people. I think that opportunity was really worth it and the opportunity to expand the relationship if we wanted to. I think I like that better, not having to feel a sense of obligation and having to [fill] a certain time slot. I could feel that we were . . . in a . . . structured project more . . . than just being human beings [who] are sharing.

4. The major suggestion made by both youth and seniors was to have more group sessions with all participants present. This is one suggestion given in the statement from the young person above. One of the seniors said,

> My only comment [is] that I think its too bad that we couldn't, as a group, have gotten together a little more often, I think, to share things, I think [that] would have been [good].

Another senior picked up on this comment and said, "Yes, because we learn a lot by being in a group like this."

Another person said,

> I like the first time we met where we talked with different people. I think it would definitely work if you had several older and younger people, and spent maybe even an hour and a half, rather than an hour, just circulating around for ten minutes, or five minutes [with each person], then you can learn a lot and have more acquaintances.

Although the point of the project is not to "have more acquaintances" between generations, it is clear from this and the other comments that seniors and youth alike

felt a real need for more time together as a group. This
suggestion will be incorporated in Chapter 5, sections C
and D.

5. The remaining problem of consequence is the extent to
which conversation between grandfriends was dominated by the
seniors in spite of repeated attempts to stress that both
partners spend roughly equal amounts of time listening and
talking. Some comments from the youth follow:

> . . . after about four sessions, [she] was aware that
> she was doing all the talking . . . so then I would
> start talking, and she would interrupt me. . . . If my
> story was over she would say nothing that had anything
> to do with the story and start into one of her stories.
> So that was really negative for me. I'm not used to
> that, and I didn't like that at all. [It] made me not
> want to share my life [stories] with her.

> . . . she didn't give me too much room to share myself,
> and so I tried to make it almost like a strategy:
> "O.K., I know she's going to pause here--'cause she's
> coughing or whatever--then I can interrupt somehow
> [without it seeming] rude."

In most of the pairings, the senior took charge of
the conversation, and the young people felt awkward about
insisting on "equal time." Additionally, the youth didn't
feel like they'd lived long enough to have an equal quality
of life experiences to share. That is, the book of their
lives consists of pages yet to be filled in, and their lives
seemed pretty limited when compared to the fulness of their
grandfriends. This, however, was not universally true.
Some of the seniors invested enough attention in the youth

to draw out their experiences, hopes, and dreams. These pairings had much greater and more mutual sharing, and were, as a result, more developed "grandfriendships."

Although this evaluation section has spent much greater attention on the problems than on the rewards of the participants in this model, that is toward the end of improving the Grandfriend model for future participants. The overall benefits mentioned in points 1 and 2 which all participants experienced by their involvement in the program far outweigh the frustrations and difficulties elaborated in points 3-5.

Chapter 5

FOR YOUTH AND SENIORS IN THE CHURCH
"FRIENDS ARE GRAND"

I.   INTERPRETATION AND EVALUATION

A.   Risking Relation

Each pair of grandfriends in each model, by their
very participation in the program, risked sharing life
across the years and thereby "laid down" their lives in the
image of Jesus before his or her grandfriend. In so doing,
they were sometimes disappointed or frustrated when their
grandfriend didn't meet them, didn't "listen with care," and
the moment passed without "personal contact."[1] Yet in every
grandfriend relationship, genuine human contact did occur,
however briefly, revealing one person to another, and
breaking down the barriers which separate young and old,
male and female, one person from another.[2]

"One's existential status changes when you risk or
give your life for another."[3]

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[1]See for example, the comments above, page 75. The
youth were most frustrated in relationships where they had
to listen without opportunity to share. The seniors were
most frustrated by the infrequency of their young
grandfriend's visits, and their lack of responsibility to
even arrange meetings.

[2]See section E below.

[3]Cf. above, p. 34.

The effect of this change varied among participants, but was most strongly evident in those who truly invested in the program by giving of their time and truly risked by sharing, giving themselves to their grandfriends, and thereby participated fully in the love of God.[4] This change occurred as grandfriends began to view life from the perspective of their older or younger partner, as inequalities in the relationship became bridges rather than barriers to communication, and as anxiety about meeting was replaced by anticipation. In this way, the "meaning barriers"[5] were broken through.

B. A Case of Contact

In model II, one grandfriend pairing, in particular, overcame barriers and truly touched each other's lives. The senior, a widow, still grieved the death of her husband, several years ago, and was the most reluctant participant in the program, especially after the initial group meeting. She would hardly speak in the group, and often appeared to be just "wasting away." Following Erickson, she clearly struggled with the life cycle issue of ego integrity vs. despair, living a life more resigned to despair than

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[4]Cf. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13.

[5]See above, p. 38, and section E below.

fulfilled with integrity. The youth was quite frustrated with her initially, as these comments indicate, "I could not relate to where she was; I absolutely couldn't. And I usually can sort of feel some kind of emotion, but I couldn't understand where it was that she was feeling."

It was very difficult for both senior and youth to continue with the program, and yet they both did. As time went on, the senior became less fearful and more comfortable, and the youth less frustrated and more open and patient. Slowly, contact grew into their relationship and their lives changed, as can be seen from these comments from the youth.

> Yes, yes, you could just see like her eyes would light up. . . . I told her that I thought it was really beautiful the way her eyes . . . you could just read her eyes! . . . I always look at eyes, but I haven't ever noticed it so much [going] from just a blank expression to complete vitality through the eyes.

In this experience of communication through their eye contact, these two grandfriends truly met, thou to thou, person to person, and although neither one spoke of God, this personal contact revealed the divine in the midst of them. Martin Buber expressed the presence of the divine in such a context when he said, "True address from God directs man into the place of lived speech, where the voices of the creatures grope past one another, and in their very missing

of one another succeed in reaching the eternal partner."[6] These grandfriends' lives were changed; existentially transformed by their willingness to risk and to incorporate the sizable barriers which confronted them on their initial meeting. For at least a time, they moved beyond the I-It relation of their separateness and lived together in the I-Thou of their humanness and of God. In so doing, they confirmed the deepest aspects of the thesis of the Grandfriend Program, that contact between young and elderly persons _can_ awaken, however dimly, an awareness of the hand of God present in the living of our lives.

Indeed, I submit that this subtle manifestation of the divine only occurs as a gift of grace, for it cannot be engineered, only hoped for or expected. Even in the instance of this particular grandfriend relation, the appearance of the divine was unannounced, unexpected, and unidentified. This is entirely appropriate, and probably necessary. These two grandfriends couldn't have had anything further from their intentions than an encounter with the divine through their contact with each other. The senior only started regular church involvement in her late adult years _after_ her husband's death, and the youth would

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[6]Martin Buber, _Between Man and Man_ (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 15.

have described herself as an agnostic. Their experience

seems to confirm Nagy's observation:

> The most important question to which the Word of God
> refers--to which rightly understood, it is the
> answer--may well be for this man, who no longer asks
> questions.[7]

For these two were certainly not asking questions of God.

This, then, is how the Grandfriend Program includes

dialogue and even proclamation: to those not even asking

questions, to seniors and youth, the presence of God breaks

into their very lives unexpected, unannounced, and often

unrecognized, but profoundly present, altering their

existential status, one to another, and enriching their

lives.

C. Psychological Complementarity

It was mentioned above that the senior was

confronting the life cycle issue of integrity vs. despair,

and focusing on despair. In a similar way, the youth was

confronting identity vs. role confusion, and experiencing

much confusion. The project assisted her in dealing with

the confusion, as her comments reveal:

> It was worthwhile, on a selfish level, to get
> out of myself. . . . since I had kind of an emotional

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[7]Ervin Valyi Nagy, "The Dialogical Nature of the
Church," in Ervin Valyi Nagy and Heinrich Ott, Church As
Dialogue (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969), p. 47.

> summer, it was really good to be able to just think
> about somebody else. . . . I knew that I was really
> helping someone, and that can't help but make you feel
> better about yourself.

The complementarity of role confusion and despair undoubtedly contributed to both the difficulties and rewards of this grandfriend relation, and it also underscores the earlier assertion[8] that these life-cycle crises, for adolescents and seniors, offer a psychological basis for mutually significant encounter between seniors and youth.

D. Grandfriends

Whereas the Grandfriend program seeks to be grounded in the example of Jesus and his friends, especially the disciples, "friend" cannot be so tightly defined to this context. Neither can its use here be limited to the special and unique friendships we may enjoy in our personal lives. Rather, the use of "friend" in "Grandfriend" seems to orient us and participants to the grand possibility for genuine human contact present when these young and old people come together. "Friend" sets the stage and creates a tone for a certain kind of relation.

In Model I, the relation was clearly too contrived, and expectations for significantly meaningful sharing were

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[8]See above, p. 14.

too high and unrealistic. Model II, however, provided more support and direction within which participants were freer to develop relationships in a natural way. Even so, less structure was desired by some participants to allow more room for genuine (as opposed to contrived) interests to grow and draw people together.

Lasting friendships which went on beyond the conclusion of the program did not occur in either model. Although this had been hoped for at the outset in model I, it became very obvious that lasting friendships, between young and old, or anyone, cannot be engineered. By the time of the second model, a continuing friendship was no longer the goal, as friendship became the example for the style of relationship between young and old in which life and faith experiences are shared in dialogue. It is important that "Grandfriends" be understood as: young and old persons who dialogue about their life and faith, in the manner of friends, for an agreed upon length of time, for their mutual enrichment, and within the context of the community of faith.

E. The Meeting of Meaning

That young and old people truly encountered one another through the Grandfriend program has already been

established above,[9] but for this to have occurred, the "meaning barriers"[10] to communication had to be overcome. These barriers were evident throughout the program, varied considerably from person to person, and were never totally overcome.

The fact that meeting occurred at all was due to 1) the ontological need of each person for affirmation--to know and be known--and, 2) the setting of relationships in the context of the church, the caring community. The willingness, if not desire, of participants to become involved in the program is grounded in this ontological need. Belonging to the same family of caring and supportive relationships, the church, seemed to free participants from some of the fear of truly sharing.

The particular meaning barriers to communication in this program were images, anxieties, defensiveness, and contrary purposes. The use of language did not appear to be a significant barrier in the communication.

The images which young and old had of one another were an initial block, but their demise became one of the real successes of the program, especially model II, as evidenced by the comments of participants.[11] Old and young

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[9]Sections A and B.

[10]See above, p. 38.

[11]See Chapter 4, Evaluation, section 2.

alike initially doubted the interest of the other age group in them. In fact, discovery of their common "person-ness" broke through the image barrier of age difference which would have confined them to merely an I-It relation. This confirms the commonness of the aging experience asserted by Nouwen.[12] The emergence of life experiences as the curriculum of the program became a common meeting point for young and old to relate as persons--I to thou.

Both youth and seniors initially experienced some apprehension about being grandfriends, and one senior definitely had anxiety about it. The model II face to face introduction of youth and seniors to one another, in a group setting, held at the church and conducted by one of the ministers, certainly had a mitigating effect on their anxieties. The introduction of a joint project for grandfriends to work upon was added to the model to ease the anxieties of those participants for whom the emphasis on verbal sharing might be problematic or anxiety provoking. Youth participants generally experienced their first solo visit with a grandfriend to cause them some anxiety, but that dispersed shortly after the visit began.

Some of the senior participants were particularly defensive, and with them, this remained a barrier to open

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[12]See above, p. 12.

communication throughout the grandfriend relationship. Examples of defensiveness included: inability to listen to the youth, constant talking without opportunity for the youth to say anything, and placing the responsibility for any conversation upon the young person. Generally, young people were wary of requesting equal time for sharing their stories, which also protected them from risking, and so they settled for the easier path of "just listening." A couple of the youth were ingeneous and successful in their attempts at incorporating the defensive behavior of the senior into a topic for discussion or sharing.[13]

In model I, one of the major problems was that youth and seniors held contrary notions about the purpose of the project. The youth planned on establishing a caring relation of friendship, whereas some of the seniors saw the young people as "helpers" not friends. This made communication very difficult. In the second model the contrary purpose was altogether different, and focused on responsibility. The seniors expected the young people to be more responsible than they were. These contrary purposes were never really overcome, and neither were they voiced early enough in the project to have been incorporated as a

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[13]For an example see the second youth's comment, p. 75 above.

topic for discussion, i.e. as part of the "curriculum" for sharing.

In spite of all these barriers, communication did occur, and on a rewarding level, in most grandfriend pairs.

F. The Church as the Setting for Grandfriends

It has been mentioned above that the church setting reduced anxiety and facilitated trustworthiness, the foundation upon which sharing life and faith experiences is built.[14] Clearly this was demonstrated in the second model, where face to face meetings were held at church to introduce youth and seniors to one another. The church as the context for the program was reinforced as young and old greeted one another with recognition and familiarity at worship on Sunday mornings. (An aspect, I might add, that has continued beyond the actual program).

The grounding of the first model in the church was much more difficult for participants to see, for all seniors were confined to the health care facility and could not physically attend church where they might have encountered their grandfriends. The lack of any all-participant group meetings in the facility did not provide an opportunity to

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[14]This is the sense that the church actually is the "context in which persons truly are freed to love one another." (See above, page 45).

intentionally ground this model in the life of the church. This undoubtedly severely limited the participants' sense of the program's foundation as growing out of the church as the caring community.

It is difficult to accurately evaluate the impact of the Grandfriend program on the life of the church. No attempt was made in either model to intentionally inform the congregation about it. Its impact was therefore quiet and subtle, as evidenced by the recognition and conversation between youth and seniors at, or following worship, in model II. It cannot be doubted that for the participants, their experiential awareness of the church as a caring community was enhanced. The small number of participants and short duration of the program contributed to such a subtle effect on the quality of the corporate life. One wonders if it might not be productive for an entire congregation to be involved in a similar program of short duration based upon friendship to broaden the quality of church life, but such is beyond the scope of this project.

The Grandfriend program is firmly grounded in the church as the body of Christ in the world. In particular, the program brings together two age-groups of persons who have much to share with each other, but who have been estranged in our time and society. The inspiration and model for bringing these persons together is, literally,

Jesus Christ, the great reconciler, who reveals our humanness, one to another, and calls us into relationship, person to person.

The role of Jesus Christ as reconciler was never intentionally revealed, only implied in the Grandfriend program. The reality of his presence in the relationships that were established is obvious by the barriers which were broken down and the genuine personal contact which occurred, yet, as in so many other events, his presence went largely unnoticed by the participants. Both for the growth of each person's faith and for the upbuilding of the church as the community of faith, the basis for the program, the reconciling love of God through Jesus Christ, ought to be revealed to participants in a conscious, intentional way, at a gathering of all participants approximately at the midpoint of the program.

It should now be clear that the criteria used to judge whether a church related program is <u>contrived</u> or <u>cultivated</u>[15] is the ultimate source of its rationale: God and Jesus Christ, or humanity and this world. One source is blinded by the limitations of being human, the other is enlightened by the ultimate purposes of God. The Grandfriend program is not an application of a psychological

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[15]See above, pages 4-5 and 14-15.

approach to the life of the church, but an application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which reconciles young and old in love. In designing the program, exercises and techniques were incorporated from psychology and education, but they were used not as ends in themselves, but as means to God's ends. We of the often typed "liberal churches," frequently do get caught up in the latest fad, and confuse our ends and means, which is why we have given such attention to the "contrived/cultivated" issue in the Grandfriend program.

It is precisely because the Grandfriend program is based in the Gospel that it is cultivated and not contrived. Similarly, it is because the church itself is founded upon Jesus Christ that it is the "sole and unique setting for dialogue."[16] For dialogue is the language which reconciles, the communication which brings persons together, revealing each one's common humanness, uniting them in love.

Such unity, the I-Thou relation, can only be of limited duration, but it alters the participants in ways which transcend the actual period of genuine contact. Hence, the fact that the Grandfriend relationships are of only limited duration, is consistent with the fleeting reality of genuine human contact. The benefits of such contact continue for each person and for the on-going

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[16]See above, p. 46.

quality of relationships, communication, and life in the
church. This is why we could say[17] that the benefits of the
Grandfriend program do not require continuing the specific
grandfriend pairings.

II. CONCLUSION

A. Thesis Confirmed

The Grandfriend Program, in both models, met real
ontological, psychological, and theological needs of youth
and seniors through the sharing of personal life and faith
experiences. The ontological need to know and be known, the
complimentarity of psychological needs between youth and
seniors, and the theological need for meaningful contact
through dialogue which breaks down the barriers of
separation between persons and unites them in the love of
God have been examined and were found to form the basis for
the Grandfriend Program.

Participants did find that the Program enriched
their lives, increased awareness of the life issues of youth
by seniors, and seniors by youth; and awakened in the youth
an awareness of the commonness and naturalness of the aging
process, including comprehension by some of their own

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[17]See above, page 28.

participation in that process. For these few young people, a first step was made toward experiencing aging as part of living, thereby beginning the foundation for the graceful acceptance of the changes it brings to all our lives.

One or two participants did experience the presence of God in the midst of their sharing, albeit fleetingly. In more subtle ways, unacknowledged by participants, God was at work reconciling Grandfriends to one another by breaking down barriers and liberating persons to risk relationship, by revealing each person's common humanity to the other and their unavoidable participation in the process of aging. In such ways, the hand of God could be seen leading us all through the experiences of our lives in general, and through the experiences of the Grandfriend Program in particular.

The contact established between youth and seniors was shown to grow out of the church, the caring community and the body of Christ, who is the reconciler drawing us into relation, one with another. Indeed, the Grandfriend Program literally edifies the church by being an example of what the church is and does when it truly is the church; it brings persons together before God in the name of Jesus Christ.

Thus, the Grandfriend Program is an obvious opportunity to seize for the abundant life of any church.

B. __The Two Models__

The adaptability of the Grandfriend Program was demonstrated by using two models; one with institutionalized single seniors, the other with independent single seniors.

The principal difficulty encountered by involving institutionalized seniors is dependent upon the degree of each person's physical and mental handicaps. Physical handicaps may affect the ability of seniors to attend group meetings and church services. This requires the creation of additional ways of making connection with the other participants, and of intentionally rooting the program in the life of the church. In the case of mental handicaps, the prospect for mutual sharing and of genuine contact to occur are greatly diminished. This is also true for such physical handicaps as deafness and blindness.

A benefit to involving institutionalized single seniors is that Grandfriends may create a project designed specifically to meet some of the real needs of the handicapped senior (e.g. writing letters for those with poor vision). An almost unnoticed difference between the two models concerns the time of year for running the program. Model I was conducted from November to February, whereas Model II was run from July to September. The difference concerns the time available to youth participants.

During the summer, young people were frequently away on vacation for a couple of weeks, which broke up continuity in their grandfriend visits, and made full attendance at group meetings nearly impossible to achieve. However, as a result of their free summer schedules, visits could be of longer duration (up to 3 hours). Also, close proximity to the grandfriend was not required, since there was time to arrange the necessary transportation.

During the school year, it is almost required that seniors be in close and easy access for the youth, and visits kept to around an hour's length. Scheduling of visits and group meetings is more problematic during the school year.

As use of both models testifies, any time of the year is possible, though the trade-offs mentioned above should be considered.

The advantage of using two models was not limited to the adaptability of the Grandfriend Program, but also included the refinement of the design. Clearly the second model saw many significant revisions from the first and improved the overall design. Similarly, there are a few suggestions for improvement which derive from the second model. These are presented below in section C. A revised model for the Grandfriend Program, incorporating these suggestions, is given in outline form, and follows in section D.

C. Suggested Revisions

   1. Responsibility and Commitment of Youth
Participants. In both models the participation by the youth
was unreliable. Despite written expectations and verbal
agreements, most did not uphold their commitment to spend a
minimum number of hours or visits with their grandfriend.
This occurred in spite of reminder calls. Comments by the
young people revealed that they perceived the "requirements"
of the program as a burden which detracted from their
enjoyment of the Program. In addition, they particularly
enjoyed and did attend the group sessions, and wished there
were more of them.

   To increase accountability and enjoyment, the
suggestion to incorporate more group sessions is included in
the revised model. With more group gatherings, and
Grandfriend meetings scheduled between group sessons, young
people must make a visit within a limited time frame--before
the next group meeting--and can be held accountable.
Furthermore, the necessity to spend a minimum of eight hours
in at least four separate meetings between grandfriends will
be discussed at the initial and following group meetings.

   The primary need for at least eight hours is to
allow adequate time to share life experiences, faith
experiences and work on a project together. This further

allows sufficient opportunity for genuine human contact to arise. The richest experiences occurred for those grandfriends who spent the most time together, and this fact needs to be conveyed to all future participants. Hopefully this will help legitimate the necessity for a responsible commitment of time to the Program.

2. <u>Expansion of Group Process</u>. Both senior and youth participants in model II felt a strong need for more meetings with all Grandfriend Program participants. In accepting this suggestion, seven group gatherings of 1 to 1.5 hours each are now proposed.

a) The first session serves as an orientation to the program, introduction of participants to one another, and pairing of grandfriends. This meeting lasts ninety minutes, and is identical with the first group meeting in model II.

b) Project possibilities are suggested in the second session, and training is done for participants to learn how to do a "Life Review." This session and all but the final group gathering last one hour. At these group gatherings, sharing will not be confined to grandfriend pairs, in fact, most time should be spent with someone other than one's assigned grandfriend in order to increase intergenerational contact and enrich the Program.

c) Training in "listening with care" and the art of dialogue will be the focus of the third session.

d) Exercises in Faith Exploration and the telling of one's own religious experience will be done in the fourth session.

e) The foundation of the Program in Jesus Christ and its setting in the Church as the caring community will be considered in the fifth session.

f) Grandfriend projects will be shown and/or shared at the sixth session.

g) The final meeting should pull together the various aspects of the Program and the experiences of participants, including personal evaluations. It must include opportunity for all to share affirmations of one another and their experiences together. It must also include training in letting go of the relationships and the Program. Participants need assistance in "saying goodbye," and concluding their involvement in the Grandfriend program in a positive, life-affirming way.

3. <u>Leadership Requirements</u>. The involvement of a gifted, caring, responsible, giving, and committed leader is an absolute necessity for this program. The two models were designed and led by an ordained minister serving as an associate on the staff of two churches of between 700 and

1000 members. The leader need not be a minister, but the support and some personal involvement of a minister is essential to the success of the Grandfriend Program in the life of a local Church.

D. <u>A Revised Model</u>

1. Identify leader for the Program

2. Solicit Participants (2-4 weeks prior to start of program)

   a. Seniors who are single.

      1) Independent

      2) Shut-in

      3) Institutionalized

   b. Youth

      1) Senior-High age

      2) College age

3. Complete Personal Information (1 week prior to start)

   a. Senior Form

   b. Youth Form

4. Pair-up Participants

   a. Equal number of seniors and youth

   b. Sex

   c. Interests

5. Week One

   a. First Group Meeting (1.5 hours)

      1) Welcome and Introductions

      2) Orientation, Expectations, and Schedule

      3) Personal Sharing

      4) Grandfriend Pairings and brief sharing

      5) Suggestions and Questions

      6) Grandfriends schedule their meeting time

      7) Closing

   b. Grandfriend pairs first meeting on their own (1-2 hours)

      1) Share basic information on personal history

      2) (Can use Personal Information Form)

6. Week Two

   a. Second Group Meeting (1 hour)

      1) Welcome

      2) Sharing from first meeting of grandfriend pairs

      3) Presentation of Project Possibilities

      4) Training in "Life Review" process

      5) Distribute "Suggestions for Sharing Life Experiences"

      6) Questions and Closing

   b. Second Meeting of Grandfriends (1-2 hrs)

      1) Decide what project to do

      2) Schedule in order to complete it on time

      3) Sharing life experiences

7. Week Three

    a. Third Group Meeting (1 hour)

        1) Sharing from Grandfriend meetings

        2) Training to "listen with care"

        3) Project proposals submitted

        4) Questions and Closing

    b. Third Grandfriend Meeting (1-2 hrs)

        1) Work on Project

        2) Continue to share life experiences

        3) Practice "listening with care"

8. Week Four

    a. Fourth Group Meeting (1 hr)

        1) Sharing from Grandfriend meetings

        2) Training in Sharing Faith Experiences

        3) Exercises in Faith Exploration

        4) Distribute "Suggestions for Sharing Faith
           Experiences

        5) Questions and Closing

    b. Fourth Grandfriend Meeting (1-2 hrs)

        1) Work on Project

        2) Begin mutual sharing of faith esperiences

9. Week Five

    a. Fifth Group Meeting (1 hr)

        1) Sharing from Grandfriend Meeting (1 hr)

        2) Presentation on foundation of Program, sharing, and dialogue in Jesus Christ, and the context for all the above in the church.

        3) Questions and Closing

    b. Fifth Grandfriend Meeting (1-2 hrs)

        1) Complete Project

        2) Continue Sharing Faith Experiences

10. Week Six

    a. Sixth Group Meeting (1 hr)

        1) Presenting and Sharing Projects

        2) Questions and Closing

    b. Sixth (Final) Grandfriend Meeting (1-2 hrs)

        1) Share life and faith experiences

        2) Do something or go somewhere special

        3) Share plans for the future

11. Week Seven: Seventh (Final) Group Meeting (1.5 hrs)

    a. Sharing what Grandfriend has meant to you

    b. Pulling together loose ends--"What has this all been about?"

    c. Saying "thank you" and giving affirmations

    d. Training in and saying "goodbye."

    e. Closing

    It is suggested that group meetings be held on the weekend at the church or other central or appropriate location. Grandfriend pairs could then schedule their meetings at their own convenience during the week.

E. Make This Model Your Own

The inclusion of the revised model is offered in the hope that others may seize upon the Grandfriend Program. The adaptability of the program has been demonstrated along with its benefits to individuals and churches. Feel free to further refine the ideas offered here and change the design to meet your own needs. But by all means make the effort to break down the barriers of both church and society which keep young people and seniors apart. Bring them together in ways which respect and nurture their unique "person-ness" and gifts. Be Christ's agent of reconciliation, that youth and senior may encounter one another and reveal the abundant life together.

APPENDIX

Appendix A

GRANDFRIEND PROGRAM - 1978
INITIAL MEETING

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
    BY Jim Howard

PROCEDURE
1. Check in with the Activities Director or Activities
    Assistant

2. Sign in the Volunteer Book at the Nurses Station. Put
    your name, who you visited, the date of visit.

3. Visit the resident.

4. Sign out--record length of visit and make any comments
    about what you did--such as taking a walk. Please do
    not record anything about your conversation. This would
    be confidential.

5. Report any medical needs to the Nursing station.

THINGS YOU MAY DO DURING THE VISIT

1. Talk with one another. Persons have many interesting
    things about their life and work which they have done
    and they will be interested in your life and what your
    hopes and dreams may be.

2. Read to persons--particularly those who have sight
    problems.

3. Take persons for walks. To take someone for a walk
    outside, check with the charge nurse to get permission
    and then sign out and back in the notebook at the desk.
    The first time you ask, check to see if that person is
    free to go anytime they wish or if you need to check it
    out each time.

4. You may wish to fix a person's hair.

5. Address envelopes.

6. You may wish to help them with mending as you visit.

7. Share your interests: pictures of yourself and family, (Many pilgrims here have pictures they like to share too.) magazines, projects you may have worked on other things, or any talent you may have such as poetry, music, etc.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. In case of an emergency or any problems report the situation to someone at the nursing station or ring the call bell in the room.

2. Leave nursing care requests to the nursing staff. If someone asks for help--changing their position in bed, etc, just say you can't help them but someone on the nursing staff will assist them.

3. Please do not come if you have a cold or any contageous illness. If you have made arrangements to visit, you can call and the activities director or nurse will give the person the message. Also when you arrive, check with the receptionist and the activities person to see how the person you are visiting is feeling. If they are not well keep your visit short. You can judge the time yourself or they may tell you if they are not feeling up to visiting.

4. Please do not bring gifts of food unless you have checked it out with the Charge Nurse. Many persons have special dietary needs. Also there are State Rules regarding food handling which the facility must follow.

5. You may happen to be visiting when the Fire Alarms are tested. Stay in the room with the patient but if you are in the halls, do not go through the doors. Also warn the patients not to go through the double doors, because they close.

6. Use your own good judgment in not telling others confidential information which your grandfriend has shared with you. If however, someone should talk about something which confuses you or which you think the staff should be aware of, bring your questions and comments to the Activities person or the Charge Nurse.

7. Make arrangements with the person you visit to find the best time for both of you to see each other. It is wise to avoid coming before 10:00 a.m. and between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. However, if the person you visit says they don't take a nap then, this would be flexible.

Appendix B

GRANDFRIEND PROGRAM 1982
INITIAL MEETING - JULY 18, 1982

Invitation

Four youth and four seniors were invited to be present in the church parlor, Sunday afternoon, July 18, at 4 p.m. for an orientation meeting which they were told would last approximately an hour.

Upon arrival, one of the youth made nametags for the seniors. Everyone was offered lemonade and cookies (few takers).

Program

At approximately 4:05, with all eight gathered, I opened with a prayer.

I outlined the schedule of events for our gathering:
1. We have come to get to know one another
2. To meet our grandfriend
3. To hear more about the program
4. To ask and answer questions
5. To look at listening/sharing skills
6. To arrange the dates and times for the additional group meetings.
7. To schedule our first at home visit with our grandfriend.

At this point one of the young people reminded me to simply have each person introduce him/herself. I asked everyone to tell his/her name and birthplace. As we went around the circle, the seniors reported that they could not hear what the young people were saying, so we stopped a minute and talked about listening skills and speaking skills. I suggested that the young people remember to speak up and talk clearly.

Each senior and youth had a personal information form (see following pages). The seniors had been given them ahead of time, and so had them all filled out, but the young people just received their form at this meeting. The youth were instructed to select a senior partner, and then both

were to spend about five minutes sharing one or two items from these personal information forms. Almost immediately the sounds of conversation began. In most cases, youth and senior alike paid close attention to the other, by sitting facing each other, and in keeping good eye contact. We talked about attending to one another as a sharing skill. After about 10 minutes, the youth selected another partner and repeated the process, again for about ten minutes.

By now it was 4:30. The packet of information for participants was handed out, and I read most of it to the group, encouraging them to raise questions as I went along. Most questions were addressed at clarifying my expectations as to how long the grandfriends could meet. I said that they should meet for a minimum of 8 hours (8 sessions of an hour each), but these hours could be divided any way they saw fit, so long as they managed to complete all three parts of the model (sharing life experiences, faith experiences, and working on a project).

At about 4:55 p.m., I announced the grandfriend pairings I had made. The grandfriends met together for another 15 minutes to get acquainted and arrange a time to get together.

The one senior gentleman participant expressed sincere doubts about continuing participation, especially since he had only an eighth-grade education. Upon hearing that the emphasis really was on sharing stories from his life (and not on paper work or more writing), he reconsidered and was willing to give it a try.

At 5:15, amidst schedule pressure from at least one senior, we stopped sharing and arranged the next two group meetings to be August 22 at 4 p.m. and September 5 at 4 p.m. One or both of these gatherings may be at the home of one of the shut-ins to include them as part of the group.

At 5:20 the meeting concluded with a prayer.

Comments following the meeting seemed enthusiastic, especially on the part of the seniors.

PERSONAL INFORMATION--YOUTH

Name _____ Phone _____

Where were you born? _____

Where did you grow up? _____

Name your best subject in school _____

List some things you enjoy doing (sports, hobbies, interests):

_____

_____

Do you now, or have you, had a job? _____ Doing what?

_____

What are some things you might do "when you grow up"? _____

_____

_____

Tell a little bit about your family (parents, brothers/sisters, others you are close to):

_____

_____

Where did your parents grow up? _____

_____

Name a favorite film or actor/actress _____

Name a favorite book or author _____

What TV shows and personalities do you watch? _____

_____

Where would you like to vacation or travel? _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION--ADULT

Name _____   Phone _____

Where were your born? _____

Where did you grow up? _____

Where have you lived? (list all locations) _____

_____

List and describe briefly the kind(s) of work (jobs) you've done:

_____

_____

What was the very first job of any kind you ever had?

_____

Tell a little about your family (parents, siblings, spouse, children):

_____

_____

Where did your parents grow up? _____

List some things you enjoy(ed) doing: (hobbies, sports, travel, special interests, etc.)

_____

_____

Name a favorite vacation spot of yours: _____

Name a favorite book or author _____

Name a favorite film or actor/actress _____

Name a favorite song or composer or piece of music

_____

Appendix C

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS:
MODEL II

PURPOSE: To cultivate personal contact between generations within the church to:

MODEL:

1. Share in dialogue (2-way communication) life experiences (past, present, and future hopes/dreams)

2. Share in dialogue faith experiences (e.g. involvements with church, ministerial relationships, attitudes toward religion, faith, church, personal experiences of God at work in one's life and the world)

3. Work together on a project.

(See suggestions for parts 1, 2, and 3 on following pages)

EXPECTATIONS:

1. Frequency--10 hours of meeting together between July 18 and September 12 (8 hours minimum, 12 hours maximum). Where scheduling is possible, two meetings per week, especially at the start, would be helpful.

2. Use of Meeting Times--All three parts of the model above deserve equal time (if you would spend an hour covering all parts each time, you'd spend 20 minutes on each part at each meeting).

3. Sharing in dialogue--Both grandfriends should have equal time to speak and to listen (if you divide your time together as suggested above, each person would have 10 minutes to speak and 10 minutes to listen during parts 1 and 2).

4. Group Gatherings--will be held at the start, in the middle, and near the conclusion of the project to touch bases, share experiences, and evaluate the model (and make changes if necessary). Attendance at the group meetings is expected for everyone.

5. Scheduling meetings is the responsibility of each young person. Always call ahead to be sure a scheduled time is still alright.

6. Problems of any kind (compatibility, inability to continue, difficulties in sharing, confusion as to expectations, questions about suitable projects, etc.) should be shared with Jim Howard. Please feel free to call at any time, 372-8249. If you are unable to reach him, leave a message with the church secretary, 378-9353.

7. Enjoy yourself and relax! Each of you is engaged in an exchange of gifts: the gifts of the experiences of your lives. Those gifts and those who receive them are precious. Treat them and one another tenderly and care-fully.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SHARING LIFE EXPERIENCES[1]

Each person should have an equal time to share and to listen. The basic rule is to pay attention to one another, whether you are speaking or listening: remember, you are giving and receiving the gift of each other's life experiences.

The following are merely suggestions for further sharing:

What was it like growing up in your family?

Describe your hometown. Did you enjoy living there?

Tell about your early childhood, schooling, friends & buddies, early romances, pets, sports . . .

How did you go about establishing independence from your parents?

How did you choose your college, career, geographic location? (i.e. what was the process for making those decisions, how did you actually go about it?)

Where were you when? . . . (Think of major events of history, recent and past, how did you respond to them? Obvious examples are the Hostage Crisis in Iran, World Wars I & II, the Depression. A listing of other events over the past 80 years is available from Jim if you're interested)

What changes have you witnessed to our way and style of life?

Tell the story of your life (How did you get to be who you are today from who you were growing up?)

Share significant influences on your life (persons, ideas, events)

Which was the favorite period of your life?

What was the most difficult period of your life?

What is the most significant thing that happened to you in your life?

_____

[1]If you are doing the personal history project, incorporate some of these suggestions into your recording sessions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SHARING FAITH EXPERIENCES:

We are all children of God. God speaks to us through the events of our lives constantly: in persons, beauty, animals, love, and through our experiences with church and worship. It is difficult to "talk" about God, and yet most of us can sense at times throughout our lives the hand of God reaching out to touch us: in our pain, in our joy, leading us, supporting us, loving us. By sharing our experiences of events which seemed to reveal God to us, we will discover ourselves "talking" about God quite naturally. Try it!

Here are some possible topics to get started:

What churches have you attended? (Which did you like better, which lesser?)
How is it that you are related to Neighborhood Church?
What ministers have really been important to you? Why?
Share a Bible passage (or two) which mean something special to you.
What are some times you have sensed or known the presence of God?
Share some memories of Christmases. What was the most memorable Christmas you can recall? Why?
What does the "Christmas story" mean to you?
What memories do you have from childhood about Santa Claus?
What is your favorite part of the worship service? Why?
For you, what is important about being a follower of Christ?
How has God led you in your life?
What does it mean for you to "have faith" in God?
Do you pray? Often? For what?
Do you believe in life after death?
What does the Easter story (Jesus' last days, death, resurrection) mean to you?
Do you ever watch TV religious shows? What do you think about the "video church"?

Additional resources for opening up discussions about faith are available from Jim. These suggestions are offered as "springboards" to further sharing, not as items on a list or a test to merely complete. One suggestion could conceivably lead to enough experiences to fill up the sharing time for all the sessions. If that happens, then alleluia!

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROJECTS

It is important to decide what kind of project you want to work on together by the second session (week) at the latest. Depending upon the project you choose, you may want to spend several sessions working only on the project. That is fine, but be sure to keep the balance between the three parts of the model so you've spent roughly equal time on each by the conclusion of the program.

Once you have picked a project, please let Jim know what it is, either by mail, or over the phone (372-8249).

The following are only suggestions. Be creative, come up with your own project idea!

1. Recording Personal History
2. Organizing & Sorting (memorabilia, home, garage, closet, family correspondence, hobby)
3. Reading (sharing favorite short books, poems, stories, or simply reading desired book if person's sight is failing)
4. Learning a skill (e.g. knitting, games, craft, cooking, hobby)
5. Gardening (or other projects around the house in need of an extra pair of hands)
6. Walking together (or other exercise)
7. Creating--a scrap book, collage, photo journal (say of a particular period of history or one's life)
8. If person is working or volunteering, then exposure of grandfriend to the work setting (another possibility would be to introduce grandfriend to family and/or friends)
9. Exposure to important aspects of each other's lives (e.g. sharing meaningful recorded music selections, poems, articles, a short book, an essay or story, working on a hobby together).
10. After learning a bit about each other, create your own project idea based on the interests you each have.

In making your decision about what project to do together, consider:

a. What is required for you to do this project?
b. Who will be getting the materials?
c. Make it realistic--can you get it done in 8-10 sessions?
d. Be sure that each of you can contribute to the project (so that it is not just a one-person endeavor).

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